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Meet our elite force of PlayStation professionals. We bring years of experience to this magazine, and here you can read what's on our one-track-minds.

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It's a sequel playguide bonanza this month, with complete walkthroughs for Toy Story 2 and Spyro 2. Whether you are young, or young at heart, we have got the solutions to all of your adventure game woes.

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The latest dispatches from the four corners of the world of PlayStation. We cover Wipeout Fusion, the new Time Crisis, the Tokyo Game Show, and the corrupt world of sports!

26 MULTIMEDIA STATION

All of the latest DVD reviews are in: We have got The Planets, The Alien Legacy box set, The Faculty, Big Daddy and even Elmo! Plus all the anime you should be watching.

30 COMPETITIONS

We've gone Star Wars crazy this month, and we've got blistering prize packs to prove it. Win a copy of Jedi Power Battles, and The Phantom Menace on video to go with it!

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The PlayStation2 is here! We've got our hands on one, along with a swag of the latest PS2 games from Japan. This huge 14 page feature goes into explicit detail about what the PS2 can do, what's coming out for it, what we all think of it (We love it!), and whether to buy one when it comes out down here.

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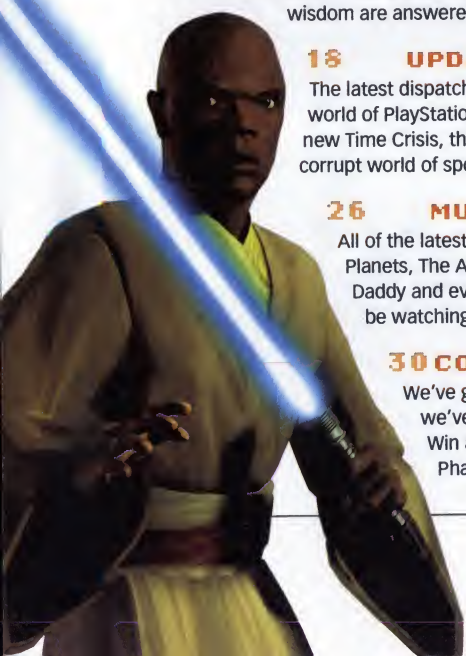
The latest figures on what's flying off the shelves at PlayStation retailers across the country. If you only buy ten games this month, buy these ones!

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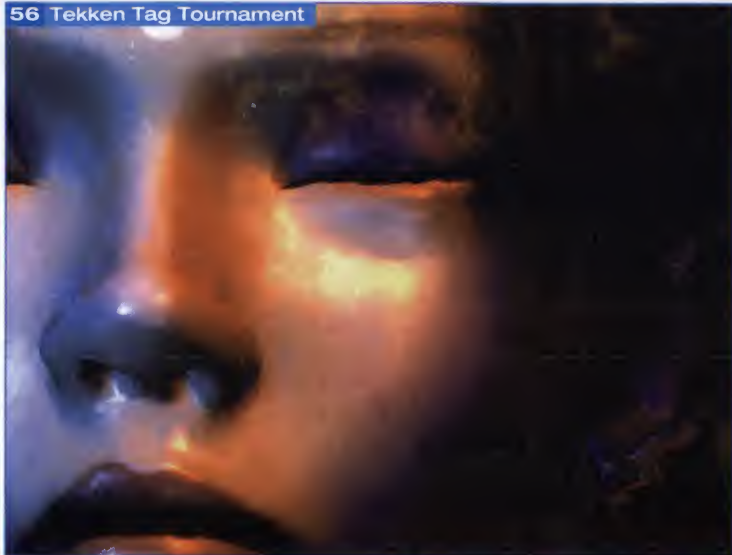
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86 BIGGEST SEX SCANDALS

Game machines aren't just for kids anymore, and the increasingly adult themes spreading across the world of console gaming have not left the PlayStation unscathed. When Nikki from Pandemonium was turned into a buxom babe for the sequel, it got a giggle out of us. When Kasumi's breasts jiggled in Dead Or Alive, we couldn't quite believe it. When a Lara Croft model posed for Playboy, it made the world think twice about sex appeal and gaming...

90 HELPSTATION

The Latest codes and cheats! Ms Nurse is ever vigilant to the requests of our readers for guidance, so if you're stuck, or want to cheat your pants off, then write in and ask!

94 INTERVIEW WITH X

The PlayStation was originally code-named the PlayStation X; that's why we call it the PSX for short. But as the age of the PlayStation 2 dawns upon us, is there any room for the PlayStation's lonely X?

96 CRITIC'S CIRCLE

Here we get down and dirty and air out the mouldy old issues of the gaming industry that just won't go away. This month, we look at whether or not Lara Croft still has a place in the hearts of videogames players across the globe

98 NEXT EDITION

Peer a month into the future, and glance at the glorious things that await a mere 30 days from now. We look at the semiotics of Army Men games, the intrusion of gambling into the gaming market, the latest news, views and warez from Japan on the PlayStation 2, DVDs, games, and more...



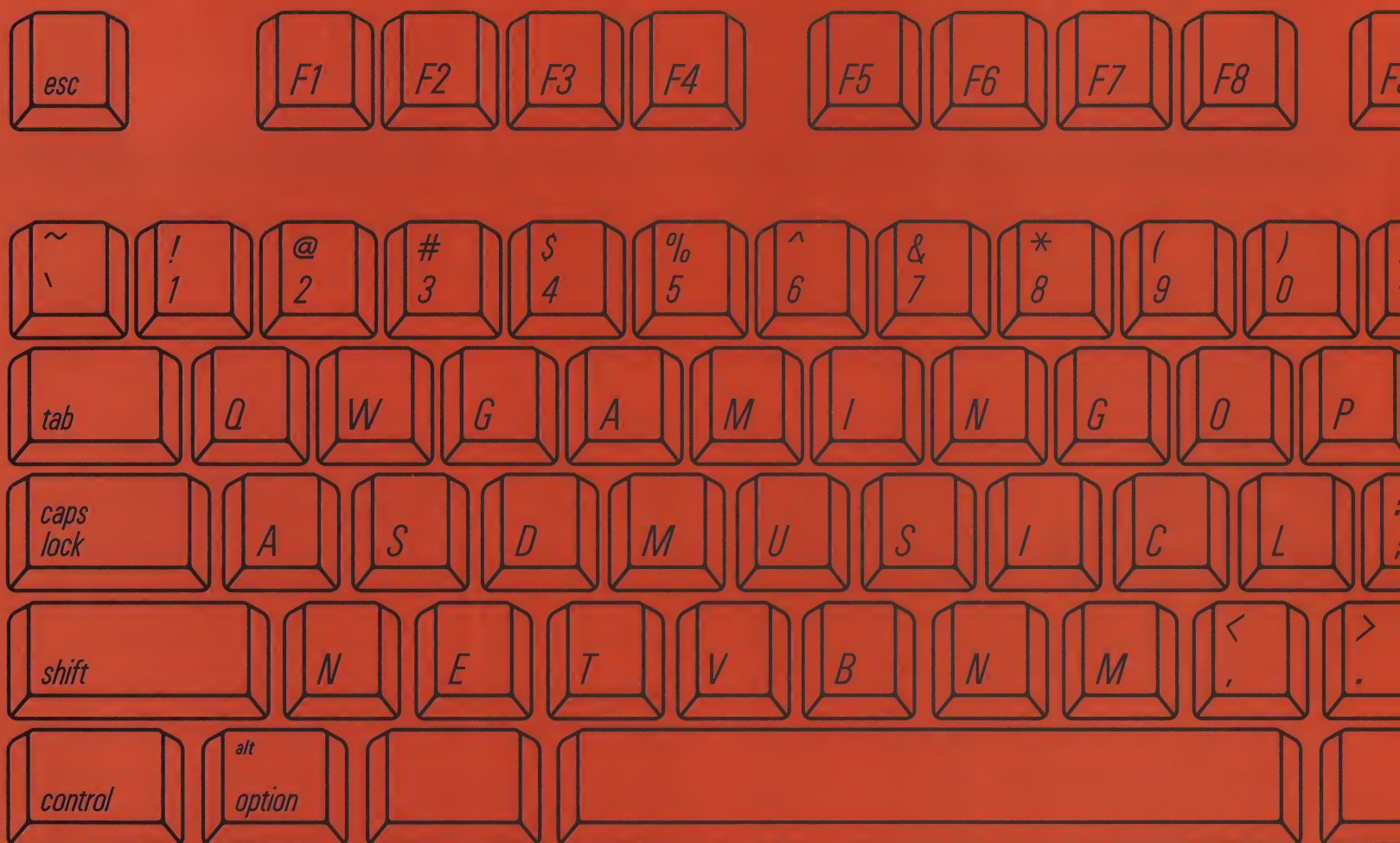
OUR PROMISE TO YOU!

Australian Station's mission is to keep you ton top of all that's PlayStation with the best reviews, and the most comprehensive news.

As an unofficial magazine, we don't settle for betas and we don't source articles from overseas. What you get from us is the True Blue Australian opinion, and not the opinion of someone on the other side of the planet. Rest assured that this magazine is honest, unbiased, and based on the final product that you, the reader and consumer, may buy. Happy Gaming.

KEVIN CHEUNG
EDITOR







RADICAL
NEW
FLAVOUR
INTENSE
REFRESHMENT



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A big "thank you" to Kev for being the best Editor in the business - we'll miss you! Chantal and James.



Can Sony pull it off again? We come face to face with the new beast on p.32

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"I WANT TO TAKE HIS FACE... OFF..."

All *Station* readers should know our creed: to provide the big picture on the PlayStation gaming scene. To show you what's happening in Australia and abroad. Our purpose in doing so is so that you will see what we're getting, what we're missing out on, who's developing what... all so that power is given back to you, the consumer, to buy what you want, to reject what looks bad, and to complain about deficiencies in the industry. We're here for you.

Funnily enough, one of our magazine's strongest critics have constantly asked "what good is it" for us to provide you with the world view. Here is your answer: PlayStation 2. The PlayStation 2 is coming, and Australians at large want to know how things are progressing for our own launch. Now, these people aren't silly enough to pass up on the biggest news this year, but now they claim to have Australia's first play test of a PlayStation 2. How convenient. Or more correctly from your perspective, just how reliable are the words of a bunch of people who have had their heads steadfastly stuck in the dirt when it came to anything remotely foreign?

These are the same people who printed Australia's first review of Colin McRae Rally 2. Never mind the fact that it

was just a reprint of a UK review - the review was based on fluff because the game still had another month to go in production before it was released! What can we say? You hire monkeys, you get peanuts.

You'll never get the same kind of buffoonery here. Only in *Australian Station* will you find Australia's first and truly reliable hands-on look at the PlayStation 2 and its launch software. Part of our commitment to you now is to bring you everything there is to know about the PlayStation 2. This month, we have pulled all the stops to bring you our massive story. It's so big that we even had to cancel Work In Progress and the Buyer's Guide to fit it all in! We've got the machine, we've got the games,

we've thrashed through them all, and if you haven't stopped salivating all over the page, turn to page 32 NOW for our big feature!

And before I forget, this is going to be my last issue as Editor of *Australian Station*. I will still be floating around with the odd review of course, but thanks must go out to the entire *Station* team (especially Chantal and James); and of course you, the dedicated readers. Your enthusiasm and support make it all worth it.

KEVIN CHEUNG
EDITOR



MEET THE AUSTRALIAN STATION TEAM

Just who are these freaks of nature?



Kevin Cheung

Specialises in
Fighting, RPGs, platforms, adventures

Currently hooked on
Dead Or Alive 2



James Cottee

Specialises in:
Strategy, action, retro, adventures

Currently hooked on
Colony Wars Red Sun



Chantal Bairle

Specialises in:
Music, racing, puzzles, platforms

Currently hooked on
Bishi Bashi



Amos Wong

Specialises in:
Adventures, RPGs, action, anime

Currently hooked on
Alundra 2



Keith Talent

Specialises in:
Sports, racing, shoot 'em ups

Currently hooked on
Rollcage 2



Aaron Lai

Specialises in:
Fighting games, strategy, action, RPG

Currently hooked on
Jedi Power Battles

STATION BOOK GUIDE

More playguides this month - we've got two great platform games totally exposed!



Australian Station is always here to satisfy all of your gaming needs, and this month is no different.

Attached to this month's issue of Australian Station is Volume 5 of the Station Cheat Books, containing massive and comprehensive guides to two of this year's biggest action/platform titles.

TOY STORY 2

Disney/Pixar's blockbuster CG film, *Toy Story 2*, is also one of the most popular new platform games available on the PlayStation. Offering no end of platforming hi-jinx, puzzles, action and of course all your favourite characters from the movie.

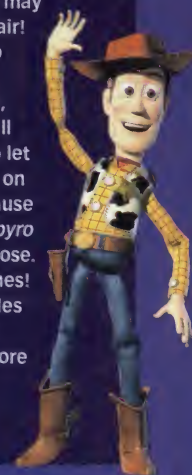
Step into the space boots of Buzz Lightyear, intergalactic hero on a quest to save his friend Woody from an evil toy collector. You'll meet up with Mr Potato Head, Little Bo Peep, the pig, the dinosaur, the slinky dog and all the rest of the gang. They've set an array of puzzles and quests for you to solve, but with our trusty playguide at your side the game will seem like child's play!

SPYRO 2: GATEWAY TO GLIMMER

The second adventure of Spyro the dragon is huge, much bigger than the first game, involving new levels, new baddies, and new special moves Spyro can pull off in his quest to thwart Ripto and his army of evil-doers. There are 28 enormous levels, and there's a bonus stage on top of that. It may seem daunting at first, but don't despair!

We've got the low-down on how to clear every level of its orbs and talismans, how to defeat the bad guys, and all the secrets and tricks that you'll find along the way. There's no need to let the biggest and best dragon game yet on PlayStation get the better of you, because with this playguide at your command *Spyro 2* is as easy as shooting fire from your nose.

That's right, we've got two big games! Two big sequels! And two big playguides to help you get the most out of them! What more could you ask for? What more do you need? This is the power of PlayStation to the power of two! Are we good to you or what?





FEEDBACK



This is where the most important people in the gaming universe (you) get to voice their opinions about games. Send in your comments, concerns and complaints to:

FEEDBACK

Australian Station



Level 6, 418a Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Email: playstation@next.com.au or visit <http://www.hyperactive.com.au>

Also, each Letter of the Month will win an amazing DUAL FORCE STEERING WHEEL from Livewire!



Gauging the X Factor

Hi people at Station,
First of all I think your mag is brilliant and I buy all the issues. I especially like the Feedback Q&A pages as they are a great help. But now to the point, my Dad was telling me about a new console coming out later this year called the X Box. It is supposed to be made by Microsoft and will be better than the PlayStation 2, which I think is hard to believe. Have you guys heard of this console or is it just my dad talking out of his arse.

Oli

We are really glad that you like the Feedback section, Oli. Anyway, here's the story on the X Box: basically, it's a PC you play on your television. The specs of the machine are indeed very impressive, but by the time the machine is released in the next year or two, they will be a very ordinary console.

PlayStation fans needn't worry too much about Microsoft's new system yet, as they have yet to gain the kind of major software support that existing companies like Sony, Nintendo or Sega have.



My crap's better than yours

Dear Station,
WHY? Just to say now your mag is great. The best one I've purchased, but I was stunned to realise that you have Toy Story 2 in the "Hall Of Shame." What kind of people do you have working there?

I mean come on, it's not that bad. While on the subject why does everyone give Gran Turismo 2 such good reviews. IT SUCKS! It should be in the hall of shame itself. I love racing games, but it still sucks.

Steven Taylor

Toy Story 2 was a game we all basically felt didn't live up to the hype surrounding the movie. There are some of us in the office who liked it, but they were just out-voted. On another note, your dislike for Gran Turismo 2 demonstrates there's always a reason for disliking something.



Gauge

Pirates = Pokemon? Gotta catch'em all, gotta catch'em all!

Catch the Weasel

Hey Dudes,
When I read that letter that Weasel wrote in issue 11, I just thought to myself how totally ignorant Weasel is. If you are trying to make a living, why don't you go out and get a decent job? Or maybe start your own (legal) business? What you are doing is stealing somebody else's work and selling it for your own personal gain.

For example, Weasel, what if you wrote books for a living, and suppose some stupid, pathetic fool came along and photocopied your entire story and went off to make more money than you did with that exact same story?

Or maybe you designed houses, and suppose some stupid, pathetic fool saw your blueprints for a house and decided he would make that same house, and he got a sh*tload of prizes and money for designing the best house in a long time.

Even you must remember when you were in kindergarten, and the group was made to paint paintings, and if the kid next to you copied you, you would have said "Ms Teacher! Billy copied my painting!," and Ms Teacher said "Billy, this was Bob's idea, why don't you think up your own?"

What I am trying to say is that stealing other people's ideas for personal gain is completely wrong, and you are a petty thief. Why do you think they have huge fines for videogame (and movie) pirates, I heard one person got fined \$20,000. I think it's just not worth it, morally and financially.

Jack Nicol

Spoken like a true gentleman. Considering it is property we are talking about, it's a wonder why the theft of intellectual property isn't given the same kind of profile as acts of 'criminal' theft.

However, it's worth noting that the law will only protect the intellectual property of something that has taken on a 'material form' - which is usually proven if it has been published. The implication is, of course, that the law will not protect 'ideas'.





Metal Gear Solid: too good to pirate



Piracy rant

What makes a person function? Money. It's amazing what people will do if money is involved. Most things people DO involve money somewhere along the line. Think about it, from as innocent as school and sport to the more serious such as prostitution and crime.

At the end of it you have a lump of cash in your pocket. Piracy harms developers as well as consumers. We've all heard it before, but what does it mean? Developers lose money, therefore they lose funding to produce games, so you end up with a dodgy game like Spiceworld. Nuff said.

Whether or not you have worked it out yet the only reason pirates copy games is to make money. The blind customer may believe they are getting a good deal at fifteen bucks a game. The pirate however is making about ten dollars on every copy.

Money that should go to developers. Money that should be in the pay packets of those who worked strenuous hours to make every aspect of the game as good as possible. How long do you think it took the developers of Metal Gear Solid to program the guards to react the way they do when they hear a noise or see footprints? They deserve to be paid for their time and effort. Pirates are thieves.



Anyway I mentioned earlier that money makes people tick. Why then aren't there rewards for people who identify a pirate. If the pirate was charged \$300 per copy and the identifier received \$100 out of that \$300 for every game that is recovered, I think the problem would be significantly decreased. I think it is crazy to hear that Sony has spent two million dollars to hire detectives to find the thieves. I mean it is obvious that it won't work!

In addition I was appalled to hear that Playstation 2's games were of DVD format. They say the new system won't run pirated games. What a load of #!*\$@. People will do anything to make money. Why couldn't Sony have woken up and made the discs a different size or shape to those commercially available?

It seems as if Sony who have reportedly lost billions of dollars in sales have not yet learnt their lesson. Maybe in the end, it will come down to the loyal gamers to save Sony. We will prevail.

C. Orfanellis

LETTER OF THE MONTH

This month's winner receives a Dual Force Steering Wheel!



Station life support

Hello dear PlayStation people, Don't ever scare me like that again Kev. One afternoon I asked my dear sweet mother to head down to the local newsagent and buy me the latest issue of your magazine for me.

I gave her specific instructions to bring me the one called Australian Station. 20 mins later she returns only to tell me that the newsagent doesn't get that magazine. I fainted and woke up 5 hours later in hospital.

How would I go on living? How could I survive the PlayStation 2 launch? I found myself spending my last weeks of school playing one of the greatest games on the PC - Half-Life and its expansion pack Opposing Force, which is even better. During the crisis I'm sad to report I bought an official magazine (please forgive me).

I found myself missing your magazine and starting to really appreciate it for all it wonders while flipping through the trash in my hands called Official Australian PlayStation Magazine. Then one day I saw Kevin on the 5:00pm news talking about PlayStation 2 being rigged up to launch laser guided missiles (scary thought). I began to think maybe there was hope!

So a few days later, I went to my newsagent and found my beloved magazine. I just wanted to remind all

of your readers of that Janet Jackson song "you just don't know what you got till it's gone." Treasure this magazine people, after all it is Australia's most popular PlayStation magazine. By the way, will Half-life come out on PS2?

The Preacher

Ooh how I love a good ego-stroking. But seriously, I sincerely hope nobody bought into that story about the PlayStation 2 being able to launch guided missiles. Believing such a thing is as misguided as believing that videogames make you violent. It's an end-user product. It's designed to entertain.

As for Half Life, nothing's confirmed, but it's too early to say what will and will not be on the PlayStation 2.



It would certainly be an idea if companies tried encouraging the consumers to 'work with them'. After all, who's going to help someone who comes off looking arrogant and heavy-handed about their problems? People who do in pirates should be made to feel as though they've done something good, as opposed to having done something they were obligated to do.

Also, there's no reason to be upset about the PS2's compatibility with the DVD format. For starters, there's no way to pirate DVD discs; and secondly, manufacturing non-standard proprietary discs is a very expensive and largely unnecessary process. You might as well be using cartridges if you wanted to do that.

Expensive coasters

Last year I went to a computer swap-meet to get NASCAR Racing 2 on PC, and after I got it, I saw the usual PSX stand with cheap PAL games. I saw a copy of NASCAR 99 by EA Sports for 30 bucks, so instead of paying \$100 for the same thing (it was like it was from K-Mart), I regrettably purchased it.

I get home, unwrap it and shove the disc into my PlayStation. So far, so good - nice film footage of real NASCAR racing for the intro. I get to the menu, then the game. It was alright, until I reached my 4th lap of 25! Boring! The crappy imitation of a 700 horsepower V8 sounded like a crappy Ford Falcon! I'm telling you, the big piss-off was that the game was the SAME as the PC version by Sierra Sports! I've played the PC version, which is like REAL NASCAR racing, with loads more options than EA's crap-box title!

I'll admit one thing. I actually played through the whole season, with 20 something tracks. After finishing first in the season, I got a 20 second movie with the same commentators as the season intro movie just talking about how sweet success is! BORING! Okay, well I enjoyed it until it went back to the menu with NO CREDITS, NO SECRETS NO NOTHING!!!

You can't really say I should rent, because I do, but the resale value is \$15-20.00, so I didn't do too bad. Thanks for your time, and I'll like to say there should be more producers like Codemasters around, so we'll get more games like No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking!

Liw



Castlevania: bloody good fun



Have at you, vile weed!



Klonoa - a furry upright-standing rodent with pants that actually played well

FREAKY QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Hey Smarties, find this picture elsewhere in Station and tell us where it is to win →

Changing names

Dear Station Magazine, I would like to congratulate you on your fine mag. Before I ask my questions, I'd like to ask about the history of this mag. The name of this magazine changes a lot. Since issue one of the official mag, it's changed 3 times.

Do you change it for fun? Or do legal forces really make you? And what is with the Gamer magazine and yours? The writers always change. Hillous used to be the editor, then Kevin Cheung came from Gamer and took over as editor... I'm confused. Now to my questions:

[1] In Tomb Raider 4, Lara is 16 and has lots of guns as she travels around tombs. Isn't she under aged to be in possession of guns?

[2] What is your favourite game ever?

[3] Why are the white lines on the side of the road in GT crooked?

[4] Do you have your own PlayStations? How many are there at your work altogether?

[5] Is C&C Retaliation a good game? You never reviewed it because you went through one of your name change phases. What would you give it out of ten?

[6] My bird always barks when he hears the GT music.

[7] Why are your mags so small compared to the ones from the UK?

[8] If Akuji the Heartless doesn't have a heart, then why is he alive?

[9] Someone should make a game on chariots where you can fight people while you are racing. Or what about a Teletubby RPG game?

[10] The people from the official UK mag gave the whole Tomb Raider series 10/10. I think it's because she is British.

[11] For all of you people who pirate games, "You're bad mmkay!"

[12] My mum's favourite saying is "I regret the day I ever bought you the PlayStation".

By the way, people who own N64s suck

We have actually only gone through two name changes - the first one was to Australian PlayStation when we became independent; and the second when Sony decided to enforce their PlayStation trademark more narrowly, hence our new name Australian Station.

So yeah... it was for legal reasons. As for our relationship with the old Gamer mags, it was basically absorbed once we went independent. Anyway, here's the answer to your questions...

[1] Back in those days, there weren't any gun laws to speak of.

[2] That's a tough one, as I have loved so many games over the years. Some of them include Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, Klonoa, Soul Blade, Final Fantasy VII, Medieval, as well as games on other systems. James, on the other hand, has only one love: Elite.

[3] It's called 'jag'.

[4] Of course we have our own! The office games room has got mountains of them.

[5] It wasn't too shabby a conversion - probably a 7.

[6] Cool - too bad you can't show your bird off on Hey Hey It's Saturday anymore...

[7] Because our mags aren't loaded with pointless ads.

[8] That is meant to be part of the main plot.

[9] Given the recent influx of Barbie games, Muppets, Elmo, and such, it wouldn't surprise us if the Teletubbies, The Wiggles, and Hi-5 somehow jumped in on the act.

[10] You could be right... by themselves, the Tomb Raider games are fine. But if you have played all four of them, you are more than likely to hate it by now.

[11] I hope you put on your most menacing voice for that one...

[12] Well why don't you just get your mum to play a bit of Final Fantasy? We have had plenty of mums write in before about how they play on their sons' PlayStations while they are at school but will never admit to it.

Gauge

Is the PlayStation getting too old too fast? Bring on the PS2!



No patience for GT2

Gran Turismo is in a class of its own when it comes to racing sims. Granted Gran Turismo 2 is a larger game (they split it on 2 cd's so it shouldn't have mattered), but what the @#&\$ is with the menus?!

I don't really follow the PlayStation console architecture, but haven't they ever heard of the two words, "read-ahead" and "cache"? If you put a 2x reader in the console, with no way to upgrade (obviously they had some very good reasons), then wouldn't you attempt to make it as fast as possible or at least not as noticeable?

That means reading ahead on the menus so that when I press a button I am not forced to wait 3 seconds for the menu to change EVERY BLOODY TIME. This little glitch pisses me off constantly, therefore totally deteriorating my enjoyment of the game.

Even a menu option to turn on "read ahead" would have been nicer, but of course it would have been foolish to even think of giving an intelligent choice to the market due to the bloody diversity. In any case, the menus are a hassle and I would rather crank it on a PC Emulator. The access time is a freaking joke. Case closed.

Majik

The funny thing is, every single one of us are sitting here nodding in agreement with you. Correct as you may be, though, you should still take into consideration that the PlayStation is five year old technology. It's not quite cutting edge anymore.



And Amen to that. For you readers out there, this is one of the reasons why it pays to rent first, and also why you should always be on the look out for our reviews. That way, you'll have both our assurance as well as your own that you're getting a product that you want. This should also be a message to developers not to get lazy when it comes to game design.

Push the button, Max!

Hey Station, I heard that Japan's outlawed the export of PlayStation 2s because it can be used to launch guided missiles. Does this mean that it won't be released outside Japan? Does this mean that we will never see one?

Cosmotron



Spot Amos if you can!

It's all kinda funny, eh? First of all videogames are violent, and now this. Next thing you know, the extremists are going to start saying that you can use the PlayStation 2 to clone human beings.

Firstly, the report that you heard was a publicity stunt that was blown a bit out of proportion. You see, the hardware that is in a PlayStation 2 is statutorily defined as a "supercomputer". And since the PlayStation 2 falls right within that definition, it is deemed unsuitable for export because a computer with that kind of performance capabilities can be used for, amongst other things, military operations.

However, the law traditionally lags behind technological innovation, so it's really a case of videogame hardware progressing faster than what the legislators can keep up with. It's still a games machine, it can still be exported with a special permit, and you can rest assured that it will be out here in Australia in no time.



PlayStation 2: the next high-tech device in new-age warfare?

Give me snow!

Hi Station Magazine

I've noticed reviews of most snowboarding games give a rating of under 60%. I'd like to know if any of the games are worth playing, and which game you rate the highest. I also have a good idea for the magazine. You could do an article about the process of making PlayStation games, and interview someone who works in the industry. Maybe we could find out why PlayStation games are so expensive! Keep up the good work!

Nick G, Heathmont

Snowboarding games initially started out as a good idea, but then so many companies jumped on to the bandwagon so quickly that it turned into a cheap, commercial fad. The last great snowboarding game on PlayStation was Coolboarders 2.

As for your suggestion, it sounds like a great idea. We always try to

bring as much of the development process to you with our interviews, but if we followed them all the way, it might take up the whole mag!

The short answer as to why games are so expensive is basically licensing and intellectual property. It's like buying Lego: it's the ideas that are expensive. However, things are getting better. Hot new release titles like Star Ocean Second Story are only \$49.95, which is a steal!

Importers dealt a blow

Dear Station Magazine, Something weird's just recently happened to me. I'd just bought Resident Evil Survivor, but when I started her up, I got a funny screen saying that I couldn't play it. A couple of friends told me that it's because I had a mod-chip in my PlayStation, and that I was probably playing a pirated version.

But I this wasn't pirated! I even checked with the store. And the only reason I have a mod-chip is so I can play the occasional import game. Is there anything I can do about this?

Jeff Berry

What you experienced is Sony's latest weapon against piracy. Basically, it's a software encryption code that detects whether or not you have a mod-chip installed.

If you do, the game cuts out and that's the end of the story. It's unfortunate it should affect people who are using mod-chips to play legitimately imported games, but on the other side of the coin, it is Sony's most effective weapon against piracy.

On balance, it's actually a good move, and there isn't much you can do either seeing as both the Japanese and American markets have been using these codes as well. You're probably better off getting yourself a straight overseas machine for your importing habits.



Should snowboarding games just be written off as another fad to be forgotten?



Star Ocean Second Story at \$49.95



Resident Evil Survivor



PlayStation Update

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Incredible goodies to tease your mind for the next month!

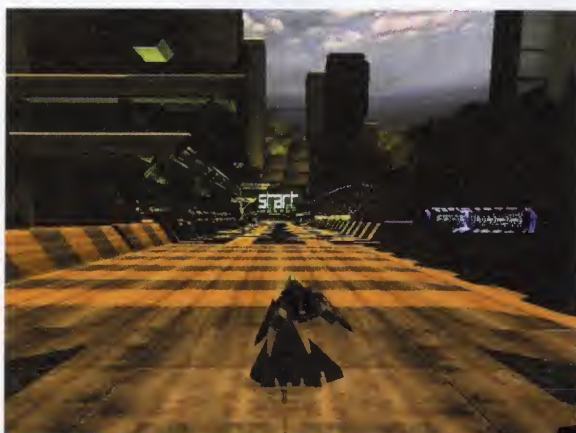


Wipeout Fusion is coming!

SCEE's PlayStation 2 lineup dominated by futuristic racing!



Wipeout Fusion: The PS2's ticket to racing insanity



More detail than ever before!



The Felsar ship looks great!



This is going to rock so very hard

PLUS:

Also announced for the launch of the PS2 were The Getaway, This Is Soccer 2, Formula One 2000, Dropship, Evo Rally, Spin - Sprint Car Racing (developed in Australia by Ratbag!) and Drakan. These were only listed as examples of what's in development, stacks more are on their way. The good news about all of these games from Europe is that unlike Japan and America we share the same TV format (PAL), so instant they come out in the northern hemisphere we will be able to play them too!

SCEE recently announced part of its software lineup for the first year of the PlayStation2, and top of the list was the one we have all been waiting for, the latest version of Wipeout. It has been known for quite some time now that a fourth game in the Wipeout pantheon was being developed as a launch title for the PlayStation2, and now we finally have screen shots of the new beast, and its new name.

Called *Wipeout Fusion*, this latest installment in the ultimate hovercraft racing series will offer several new modes of play, a battery of new weapons, and more detailed tracks than ever before.



The game is being developed by Psygnosis' Liverpool Studio. This is the same talent that brought us *Wipeout 2097*, arguably the best in the series so far.

Since the game will be set even further into the future than before, in the year 2150, the racing craft at your disposal will be more advanced anti-gravity machines, able to float and twist around at all angles in their pursuit of victory. The vanishing point will be further

away, and the convoluted tracks place more navigational decisions in the hands of the player, permitting you to destroy buildings and open up whole new areas of track.

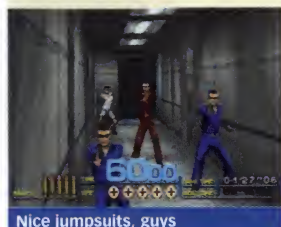
The PS2's much-touted physics capabilities will be modeling the unreality of your ship's anti-gravity handling across 48 parameters, a much more detailed treatment than the 7 variables used in the original. This opens up the option of racing your craft on its

side, or even upside down! The very first *Wipeout* was a launch title for the PlayStation in Europe way back in '95. It's credited for moving hardcore dance music into the mainstream and name acts into the soundtracks of videogames.

Wipeout also outsold all of the other PAL launch titles by two to one, and whilst it was cynically targeted mainly at the club culture, it gave us exactly what we wanted; The sensation of speed.

Namco Announces Titanic Sequel

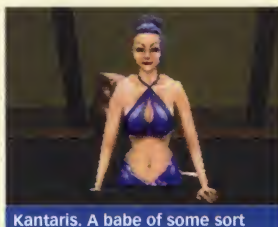
A new sequel for Time Crisis... sort of...



Nice jumpsuits, guys



This game will be just grand



Kantaris. A babe of some sort

Namco have announced that they are nearing completion of a brand new title for the PlayStation, *Time Crisis: Project Titan*. Like the previous *Time Crisis* game, Namco's new title will take advantage of the PlayStation's G-Con.45 light gun for superior accuracy.

Those of you who have been keeping up with the arcade scene would be forgiven for feeling a little bit confused, since *Time Crisis 2* already exists. Namco apparently decided that, given the PlayStation's various hardware constraints, it would not be worth attempting a

stripped-down version of the arcade game, which would have been more costly and also rather complicated owing to the game's inherent 'link-up' features.

That's why in order not to alienate its fans, Namco are making *Time Crisis: Project Titan*. They are keeping a tight lid on the details of the game, but you can rest assured it will be every bit as exciting as the original game.

The announcement has, however, created a number of questions about the PlayStation 2. For instance, will there be a new PS2-dedicated light gun?

And given that the G-Con.45 will be compatible with the PlayStation 2 anyway, will *Time Crisis: Project Titan* be optimised for PlayStation 2 usage? Or better yet, why doesn't Namco just program a new *Time Crisis* game specially for the PlayStation 2? We suspect that further announcements will be made about this in the very near future and will give a full report on it soon.



Dangerous Games?

Play your fave violent sports stars!

Shock gripped the world of American football earlier this year, when Rae Carruth, formerly a wide receiver for the Carolina Panthers, allegedly had his girlfriend murdered. After trying to hire a man to beat the pregnant Cherica Adams with intent of causing a miscarriage, Carruth allegedly went the whole hog and hired two men to shoot her dead in her car.

Miraculously the baby survived by means of an emergency miscarriage, but Carruth won't get off so easily. As this magazine was going to press the prosecution was seeking the death penalty for Mr Carruth and his accomplices. This whole story is one of the most shameful debacles in American sporting history.

All well and good, but what does this have to do with video games? Well, this controversy has extended right into our living rooms, as Rae Carruth is one of the playable characters in *Madden 2000*!

That's right, you can actually select to play as this convicted murderer, lay your hands on a few pigskins, score a touchdown or two, and chuckle quietly to yourself in the knowledge that there might be a secret code allowing him to draw a sawn-off weapon on his fellow players.

This could set a precedent for the controversy surrounding sportsmen's lives following them into the world of gaming! Remember, if it's in the game, then it's in the game!



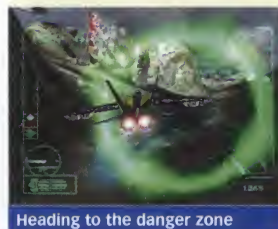
Rae Carruth. Whacha gonna do?



Cherica Adams. R.I.P.

Supercruise with N.Gen

Do you feel the need? The need for speed?



Heading to the danger zone

Out of the blue comes yet another racing game that creates a hybrid of existing genres to try and tweak the speed lobe of the gamer's brain.

N.Gen is a jet fighter racing game, possibly the most ambitious venture yet into the world of high tech future sports on the PlayStation. The game has players tearing around low altitude obstacle courses in hotted-up fighter jets, with a military arsenal at their disposal and the threat of flaming death around every corner.

The game is obviously a challenger for the futuristic racing crown held by *Wipeout*, and considering the efforts made in the recent past by



Better than Wipeout?



games like 360, Killer Loop, and even the execrable *Plane Crazy*, one can't help but wonder what chance the brash new software house responsible has to crack the market. Well, *Curly Monsters*, the creators of *N.Gen*, have amongst their number the creators of the original *Wipeout*. The course of play is similar to that of *Gran Turismo*, in that you have to win races in a

career mode to earn upgrades and faster jets. The tracks will be flown over 14 recognisable world landmarks, and can be flown clockwise or anticlockwise to double the variety.

We have not yet got a playable version of this racer yet, but hopefully we will be able to back up these pretty screen shots with a more analytical discussion next month. *N.Gen* will support one or two player racing, and is due for release in June.

Black & White

Evil will always triumph because good is dumb



Behold: Your cursor is The Hand Of God



Such stunning levels of detail would be best suited to the PS2

Lionhead Studios, the software development startup founded by Peter Molyneux is bringing its hot new God sim *Black & White* to the PlayStation. This innovative new title has been in development for years, and excitement is mounting now it finally looks like it will live up to the fantastic claims made by its creators.

For while in any normal God game you can toy with the lives of your diminutive minions in a vast and evolving fantasy world, in *Black & White* the game dynamically responds to your actions, judging you to be good or evil.



Monster alert!

Respond to your worshippers' cries for help with kindness, and the game world starts to look like the garden of Eden. But if you mistreat your followers and rain vengeance upon them, then the skies darken,

the plants wither and die, and your on-screen avatar becomes a rather hideous demon creature.

In addition to the "hand of God," your controlling implement in the game, you also get to nurture a giant creature in the game world. Called a titan, it looms over your tiny people and while it's a humanoid

familiar, it can be a cow, an ape, a turtle, a lion, or even a dragon. It will defend your territory, and mimic your actions. While you can't control it directly, if it does what you want you can pat or scratch it, and if it misbehaves you can slap it silly.

Black & White is an epic game of unprecedented depth, and is expected out on PC by September. A PlayStation version is to follow, but with the PlayStation 2 release around the corner by that point, Lionhead would do well to consider a version for the newer platform.

Mini News



Mike Tyson

Infamous in the boxing world for his ear-biting, sportsmanship, and womanising antics, Codemasters have chosen to sign boxing superstar, Mike Tyson, for their next venture into a PS boxing title instead of Prince Naseem. Considering the brand of attention the boxer attracts, the move has raised a few eyebrows.

The move follows an earlier decision by EA Sports to exclude Mike Tyson from their flagship boxing sim, *Knockout Kings*, due to his public reputation and time spent in prison. Understandably, EA Sports didn't want their family-oriented product to be associated with the boxer in any way.

However, it would appear that Codemasters would disagree with such an approach. In a press statement, Mike Hayes, sales and marketing director for Codemasters, explained that Mike Tyson's reputation as a successful boxer will be their key to cornering the targeted youth market.

"Codemasters carried out a lot of research in America, and if you ask a teenager who's the greatest heavy-weight boxer of all time, they'll say Mike Tyson". Hayes further said, "We're not putting our heads in the sand about his past, but from a pure sports point of view, he's the best."

This isn't the first time Mike Tyson has turned heads in the gaming world. In 1985, *'Mike Tyson's Punch Out'* was a runaway success on Nintendo's 8-bit NES system. However, after being thrown into prison for some sexual transgressions (namely rape), Nintendo refused to put his name on the SNES sequel, *Super Punch Out*.

The Strangest Freebie

EA Sports Glowing Sign

The press conference was progressing smoothly enough, with just the right mix of good company, mini spring rolls and imported beer to set off the atmosphere of synergy amongst the assembled personages at EA HQ. Giant sales charts where everywhere, depicting EA's unstoppable climb to global video game domination. Still, Sandy Newton, PR manager

and Station Magazine's contact inside EA seemed troubled.

"It has been great working with you guys. I am really going to miss you."

"What, are you quitting?" inquired Kevin.

"Well, er, um-"

She was cut off by a square jawed executive taking the stand and beginning his speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, good evening. I'd like to thank you all for playing your part in the worldwide success of Electronic Arts. Though we couldn't have done it without you, we find that your services, and your lives, are no longer required."

A canister of tear gas arced out of nowhere, streaming deadly vapour before landing in the punch. The windows burst open as EA's private army secured the area, spraying



their machine pistols into the assembled press.

"This way - hurry!" Sandy ushered us away, and we used the gas as cover as we watched silhouettes that used to be our colleagues fall to the ground.

"You've got to take this. It could be the only way to stop them." She pushed a cold metallic rectangle into our hands before disappearing forever. We staggered blindly through the mist before finding ourselves out on the street.

Sandy Newton was an awesome help to us, but she has resigned so she can explore the Brazilian rainforest. We have yet to unlock the secret of the sign, but if you plug it in it glows, and in a darkened room it's terrifying image can stare right through your soul.

This fluorescent EA Sports sign is easily our strangest freebie of the month. And no, EA didn't try to kill us. We were kidding. Honest.



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HN21702

EA to produce Rollerjam

Cable's sexiest skating game is cruising to PlayStation

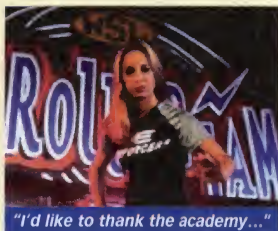
Electronic Arts has built up a reputation as being the leading producer of PlayStation games based on real sports. But now they are branching out into the world of pay TV pseudo-sports, with a new game in development based on Roller Derby, an exploitative fantasy sports program from cable tv.

Not unlike Gladiators, or any number of choreographed "Wrestling" shows, Roller Derby places sex appeal ahead of any notions of sporting prowess.

It's an exercise in titillating the audience with a squadron of buxom babes in spandex, and any genuine sporting spirit that leaks into the mix is a bonus. Still, EA are masters of tweaking the mechanics of real



How does it work? Who cares!



"I'd like to thank the academy..."



You go, girl!

sports into the boundaries of video game enjoyability, so there should be nothing to worry about

The gameplay of *Rollerjam* is a cocktail of equal parts Tony Hawk and Rollerball, with the magical spack filler of sex appeal as the garnish. Indeed, the moves and attacks the characters can pull off in the game are so outlandish that

they didn't even bother to motion capture them, due to their impossible nature and the possibility of injuring the people being motion captured.

The American version has only just been announced, so we can look forward to *Rollerjam*'s release late this year or early next. For those who can't wait for the game, the movie *Rollerball* was

recently re-released on DVD. It predicts a near future world in which deadly roller skating sports amuse the masses, but somehow isn't quite as scary as the present that pay television has created for us.

It'll be interesting to see how *Rollerjam* will fare against *Speedball 2100*, which most old school and hard core gamers are likely to go for.

The future surely rests in your Palm...

PocketStation2 could yet be in colour



The remote control for the PlayStation could look a lot like this. The future is in colour!

Palm, the company behind the successful Palm Pilot and Palm V families of palm-top computers has released the *Palm IIIc*, a handheld computer that breaks the mould of its stylus relatives by having a 256 colour display. Combined with the devices connectivity to the internet via mobile phones and vast software base, the recent alliance formed between Palm and Sony is looking more like a winner every day.

The deal allows Sony to make their own devices using Palm technology, and their stated goal from all this is to develop a remote control device for the PlayStation2, a sequel to the ill-fated PocketStation.

The PocketStation, being little more than a memory card with a tiny screen, was next to useless. But now the (for want of a better name) PocketStation2 promises to be a tool to project the power of the PlayStation2

beyond your living room to the farthest reaches of the planet.

Portable mini games? Managing your memory card slots while on-the-go? The potential is only limited by the imagination of the software developers for the Palm format, of which there were over 50,000 at last count. We expect this device to surface some time in 2001, and if the Palm series is anything to go, by it'll be smaller than a packet of cigarettes.

Mini News

Interesting sales figures have just come in from Japan for the PlayStation 2, which has managed to eclipse the Sega Dreamcast's userbase in a matter of one month. That's right - Sony took one month to do what Sega took two years to accomplish! Sega's latest reaction to the PlayStation 2 has been to give away Dreamcasts for free. Well, at least that's what they're doing in America. It's not likely they'll do such a thing in Australia given how badly it's doing already. How badly? Well, the latest sales figures indicate that the Dreamcast sold less than 1000 units over the Christmas 1999 period. How it's fared since then is anyone's guess. Of course, this is not to say that the market's not ready for the PlayStation 2. In fact, there are more people who know about the PS2 than the Dreamcast. With a little marketing and good timing, the PS2 is going to rock very hard down here.

The Dark Knight returns! This October we'll finally get a PlayStation game starring the caped crusader, the single coolest super hero on the planet, Batman! The look of the game is being modeled on the animated series from the early 90s, arguably the legendary characters definitive incarnation. Oh, and comic fans, Frank Miller, master of crime comics is working on a sequel to his acclaimed take the Batman universe. Awesome!

News just in: rumour has it that Sony will soon be releasing a handheld PlayStation. Now that the PS2 is out in Japan, Sony don't really have anything to loose. Word has it that it will be shaped like a Discman with a 4 inch LCD screen, complete with optional hook-ups to TV sets and extra controllers. We'll have more next issue!



THE TOKYO GAME SHOW

A month before the PlayStation 2 launch, Japan was going off!



This year's theme was 'Tokyo Game Show Evolves into the Year 2000 Version!' Packing the Makuhari Messe over the April 1st weekend, some developers commented that it felt even more hectic than the last show.

CESA, the organisers, remarked that recent developments on software technology and the enhanced functionality of hardware have resulted in a shift in game genres on display compared to last September's event.

There was a drop between two to just over 12 percent across the Simulations, RPGs and action titles. On the other hand, unclassifiable games, billed as a 'borderless-genre' have increased by 17.3%

However following the PS2 launch, PlayStation Festival 2000 and Square Millennium not too long ago, there was a



noticeable shortage of major announcements regarding 'blockbuster' titles for the new console. There was no further news on how Densen, Unison and Poporocrois 3 (shown on video last September) were progressing in development.

With some Companies' undeniably lackluster showcases compared to last year, it's perhaps no surprise the the final attendance figures fell by 30,000 to 131,708 people, despite an initially strong Public Day opening.



Sony

Alongside available titles Fantavision and IQ Remix, Sony's TV DJ (previously Be On Edge) is Sony's next big PlayStation2 release, due out in Japan this summer. Another application of Parappa the Rapper and Um Jammer



Lammy's gameplay elements, the aim of the game is to create a customised action movie through rhythm.

The cute Digital Toon animal cast were beautifully realised. Using cel shaded polygons, a technique also on the rise in recent state of the art anime, the resulting characters have the flexibility of movement offered by 3D models, yet retain visual attributes of traditionally animated characters.

Each of the controller buttons represent a certain

number of blocks and a different movie sequence, which must be pressed on cue to fill up a 'bar' of music.

Different button combinations yield a different cut. Get the combos right and you have got a cool and funky movie scene. Fudge it and the image quality gradually deteriorates, like watching a 3rd or 4th generation video copy.

The action scenes included a car chase, a bank vault face-off with the enemy and the hero hanging precariously from a helicopter's rope ladder as the baddies try to dispatch him.



THE TOKYO GAME SHOW



Square

Like a green oasis amidst all of the neon and general showfloor chaos, Square's stand was set up as a mini theatre, but their approach to the show was strictly teaser-like. Arguably one of the most highly anticipated PlayStation2 games, *The Bouncer* once again was unavailable as a playable demo.

What was shown of *The Bouncer* was a fantastic, albeit way too brief CG sequence of ninja-like agents diving from a helicopter and kidnapping a female character.

Gekikukan Pro Baseball boasted a perfect recreation of the sport, from the stadiums to the individual player's expressions and body language. It looked excellent, with players throwing down the bat and storming off in frustration, smarting from an injury or high five-ing the rest of the team. Subtle shifts in focusing combined with impressive camera work further increased the realism of presentation.

Final Fantasy IX's video was artfully executed, but very short. Dreamlike in atmosphere with a few action scenes, the



images were accompanied by a beautiful accapella vocal. Arriving on July 19 in Japan, the PSX title promises a return to its roots via familiar characters from *FF IV* and *V*, but combined with the detailed presentation of the last two games.

Namco

Unsurprisingly there was an army of *Tekken Tag* units at Namco's stand, but judging by the huge lines - one of the longest seen at the entire show - no amount of units would have been enough. The title's

excellent intro ran on the multitude of monitors alongside their forthcoming RPG *Tales of Eternia* on PSX, the sequel to *Tales of Phantasia*. Gamers who recall the latter's excellent anime intro won't be disappointed with *Eternia*'s. Unfortunately beyond some character sketches and screen shots on display, no more info was available on the game.

Ghoul Panic is the latest installment of their *Point Blank* style lightgun games. With a fun and spooky atmosphere this time around, the targets are various ghouls that emerge from kitchen cabinets or float around bedroom furniture while the light flickers on and off. Funnier still are the dancing skeletons: shoot their heads off and they keep on hopping around!

From Software

While the 3-D adventure RPG *Evergrace* was on show, sporting eye catching graphics and characters, *Armoured Core 2* was the main attraction at From Software's stand. In a word, it looked awesome. Two levels were playable, one where your *Core* unit had to defend an air craft carrier from squadrons

of planes. The other was ground based, set in an area teeming with enemy cannons, heavy tanks and planes. While gameplay and controls (and all its associated quirks) remain the same as the PSX version, the increase in detail and realism that designer Shoji Kawamori boasted has indeed been realised. The curving trails of machine gun fire during combat maneuvers and the trademark winding homing missiles looked better than ever, bringing the experience closer and closer to *Macross Plus*. Of course, what we need next are transformable *Core*'s!

Konami

Unsurprisingly, most of Konami's area was taken up by their smash hit music and dancing games. *Keyboard Mania*, one of their latest arcade titles, had a long lineup as did another where the action involved waving your hands above and below a pair of sensors to the beat of music.

Two mecha based PS2 titles grabbed attention. *Zone of Enders*, produced by Metal Gear Solid's Hideo Kojima and directed by Noriaki Okamura of *Tokimeki Memorial* fame was

only shown as a video. The spectacular footage promised much smoother and complex close quarter combat moves than AC2, in addition to the beam weapons and winding missiles. The mecha, called Orbital Frames, are equipped with an energy force shield - from the intensity of the fighting moves you'd better hope that it'll repel those as well!

Unlike AC2 the game will feature anime sequences to convey the story, with the main character Leo more than a tad resembling Evangelion's Shinji. Possessing the same sullen temperament, he unwittingly becomes an Orbital Frame pilot when his home colony Antiria is attacked. Metal Gear Solid's character designer Yoji Shinkawa handles the mecha while characters are by Gundam X's Nobuyoshi Nishimura.



A playable demo of Ring of Red looks set to take on Square's Front Mission Alternative, a realtime 3-D mecha strategy/simulation. As with Square's effort, fans of Patlabor 2's opening will love this game, with a techy controllable HUD camera from the mecha's point of view.

Going into the battlefield, players can control the robots and mobile gun platforms (some of which carry platoons of soldiers) as well as position and command the troops themselves in combat formations. As the ensuing

battle plays out, troops take cover or fire bazookas while the others shielded from light fire load shells in the gun platforms.

Dating sim Tokimeki Memorial on PS2 attracted a huge crowd of fanboys when it was shown on stage. Again using the cel shaded polygon technique, a character's face was displayed and moved around. The subtle hair and shadow animation was impressively executed.

Little information was available about Day of Walpurgis for PS2. From the Silent Hill team, the premise



involves lead character Eike traveling back in time to meet his ancestors, in a plot teeming with murder and intrigue. The catch is, it's his own murder he has to prevent!

The beautiful movie sequences shown indeed had a similar style to Silent Hill's, despite the different setting. Lets hope the story makes more sense this time around!



Koei

Following the heavy strategy of Kessen, Koei's PS2 Dynasty Warriors (Shin Sangoku Musho) is its antithesis - an action combat game - within a similar Japanese period setting. At this stage, the gameplay involved nothing more than hacking your way through armies of enemies on foot or horseback but wowed nevertheless by the sheer number of opponents simultaneously on screen.

Taito

PS2 incarnation of Densha de Go! aside, Taito's lineup was primarily PSX based. Ray Crisis is their follow up to the mighty Ray Storm 3-D vertical shooter. Alongside the de rigueur outrageously powerful weaponry, the overall resolution, complexity and animation of the 3-D



backgrounds have been upped noticeably. Doors open up on the ground and your fighter descends into subterranean environments to take on more waves of enemies. If you enjoyed the original, chances are you'll love the sequel.

The company's focus was otherwise clearly on their 'De Go!' series. Already available, Jet de Go! puts players in the hotseat of of airline pilot, navigating flight paths, landing and takeoffs, amongst other simulation elements.

Hopefully it won't inspire any more people to hijack airlines in a bid to fly under the Rainbow Bridge for real. RC de Go! was reminiscent of Micro Machines in more realistic environments. Like the classic combat racer, the remote controlled cars featured lock on weapons and the ability to ram into opponents, sending them flying. Hilarious fun.



Alien Legacy Box Set

Ridley Scott's *Alien* remains one of the greatest films ever made, marking Sigourney Weaver's debut as an actress. The 1986 sequel, *Aliens*, remains the fan-favourite, featuring James Cameron's pre-Titanic brilliance. In *Alien 3*, David Fincher (who later directed *Se7en* and *Fight Club*) turned the series on its head by killing Ellen Ripley. Then in *Alien Resurrection*, a French production team went wild with their brown colour scheme and turned everyone off with the humanoid-alien and a scene where Ripley gets busy with the aliens. Excellent picture quality, awesome extras... fantastic value for money. No fan should miss out on this one.

MOVIE: 9/10 DISC: 9/10

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THE FACULTY



THE ADVENTURES OF ELMO IN GROUCHLAND

The Adventures Of Elmo In Grouchland

A fun filled adventure in which Elmo learns the value of sharing in the parallel universe of Grouchland. Sesame Street's mainstays are here, plus a few new characters. Perfect for pre-schoolers, but viewers older than five may need chemical assistance to get the most out of Elmo's first feature film. **FEATURES:** Dual layer disc, Both widescreen and Pan & scan versions, Introduction with Elmo & Bug, Theatrical trailer, Making-of featurette, previews of other family titles.

MOVIE SCORE: 8/10 DISC SCORE: 7/10



BIG DADDY

Big Daddy

This was marketed as a comedy, but is actually a light-hearted drama about a man learning to take a mature attitude to his life by being forced to look after his roommate's illegitimate son. Adam Sandler stars in this collage of New York landmarks, stereotypes and a plot bookended by jokes about the novelty restaurant "Hooters." **FEATURES:** Both widescreen and Pan & scan versions, Talent profiles, Theatrical trailers, Music videos by Sheryl Crow and Garbage, Making-of featurette.

MOVIE SCORE: 6/10 DISC SCORE: 8/10

The Faculty

This is an offbeat teen comedy/horror/drama/coming of age film that plunders the coffers of popular culture in a postmodern frenzy. In a cross between *The Breakfast Club* and *The Puppet Masters*, six Ohio high school students discover their school is being overrun by alien parasites. With authority figures hunting them at every turn, can they stop the mutant teachers before it's too late? Yep. **FEATURES:** Theatrical trailer, Biographies and interviews of cast & crew, On set footage.

MOVIE SCORE: 6/10 DISC SCORE: 6/10



OCTOBER SKY



GROUNDHOG DAY

Hard Target

Jean-Claude Van Damme and John Woo - How can you go wrong? This is Woo's first Hollywood effort, coming after his classics *Hard Boiled* and *The Killer*, but preceding *Broken Arrow* and *Face Off*. The plot, irrelevant as always, involves mercenaries hunting the homeless for sport in New Orleans. If you get a kick out of ridiculous Cajun accents and can't quite wait for *Mission Impossible 2*, then this 95 minute gunfight could be your perfect dose of escapism.

FEATURES: A Dual layer disc, Theatrical trailer, Production notes, Cast and Filmmaker's notes, Six different audio languages.



HARD TARGET

October Sky

The year is 1957, and Sputnik's bleeping heralds the dawn of the space age. This is based on the true story of Homer Hickam Jr, who was born to a life of subterranean drudgery in a West Virginian coal town, but through his passion for amateur rocketry forged a new future for himself at NASA. The story is relayed in equal parts teenage comedy, domestic disputes and picturesque 50s imagery, and despite one or two cliches is a well-rounded piece of cinema. **FEATURES:** Dual layer disc, Making-of featurette, Theatrical trailer, Production notes, Cast & Filmmaker's notes, Web link.

Groundhog Day

Bill Murray is cast perfectly as a self-absorbed weatherman on Pittsburgh television. But a routine assignment to observe the mythical groundhog divine the end of winter finds him trapped in a time loop. He lives February 2nd over and over again. How he adapts to his now predictable, eternal existence makes for the bulk of the comedy in this film, and the human drama stems from his repeatedly thwarted attempts to seduce his comely producer, played by Andie MacDowell. Easily one of the best comedies of the 90s. **FEATURES:** Theatrical trailer, Talent profiles.

MOVIE SCORE: 8/10

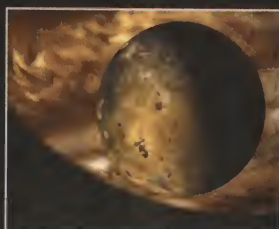
DISC SCORE: 4/10

MOVIE SCORE: 7/10

DISC SCORE: 7/10

MOVIE SCORE: 7/10

DISC SCORE: 6/10

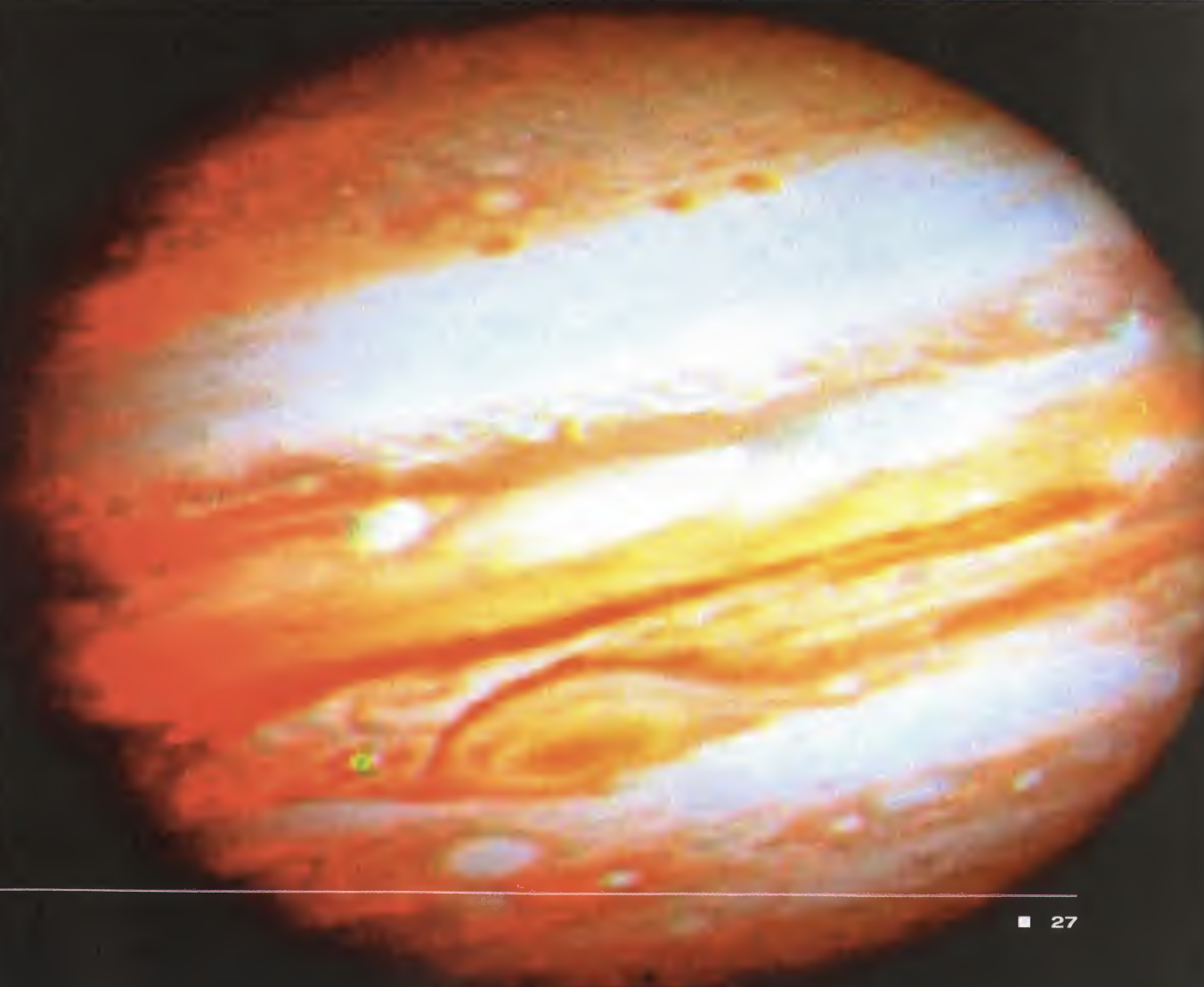


The Planets

This stunning BBC doco about the planets and moons of our solar system is now available in a double DVD set. Exclusive interviews with spacefaring pioneers, rare archival footage, computer graphics, and an exhaustive treatment of the facts over eight episodes makes this essential viewing for anyone interested in the nature of the universe. From the red spot of Jupiter, to the Volcanic Io and the hazy Venus to the frigid Pluto, this production answers all your questions. The timeless appeal of the planets crosses all boundaries, and this is the best treatment yet.

FEATURES: Two dual layer discs, Epic 390 minute running time.

MOVIE: 9/10 DISC: 8/10





Pokemon:

The first movie

Best described as a l-o-n-g episode to introduce the final Pokemon, Mew, this movie still has a couple of things to offer in its story.

The main theme focuses on genetic cloning. Mew was thought to be extinct, hence a new and powerful variant called Mewtwo was created. And then all hell breaks loose. The movie isn't bad viewing, and it's fantastic if you're a Pokemon fan; but the video transfer is horrendous, taking us back to the days of Batman The Movie. It's also a source of great disgust that there aren't any Japanese language options whatsoever. You can, however, watch it in French. Watch as we jump for joy.

MOVIE: 6/10 DISC: 1/10

RUSH HOUR



Random Hearts

Harrison Ford stars as a police detective drawn to a female US senator by an extremely convoluted sequence of events. Their respective spouses were having an affair, and when said adulterous cads are drowned in a plane crash, Ford's character has to find out why. Goddamn it! This is a decent drama, but one more likely to appeal to your mother than yourself. **FEATURES:** Dual layer disc, Theatrical trailers, Making-of featurette, Isolated soundtrack with highlights, Director's commentary, Deleted scenes with director's commentary, Talent profiles, Trailer for The Devil's Own.



Rush Hour

Before watching this you should probably ask yourself: "Can I tolerate the zany antics of Chris Tucker?" If the answer is "Yes," then this is a fair Jackie Chan movie and a rollicking good romp besides. If, however, you found The Fifth Element was utterly ruined by Chris Tucker's rubber-mouthed gibbering, then *Rush Hour* is going to slow to a near crawl.

FEATURES: Dual layer disc, Biographies and interviews with cast and crew, Theatrical trailer, Making-of featurette, Deleted scenes, "Whatever happened to Mason Reese" short film, Two music videos, Director's commentary.

MOVIE SCORE: 6/10 DISC SCORE: 8/10 MOVIE SCORE: 7/10 DISC SCORE: 8/10

WAG THE DOG



Wag The Dog

This freakishly well-timed movie depicts an American President who distracts the public from a sex scandal by going to war with Albania. Concept sound familiar to anyone? Starring Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Willie Nelson, Denis Leary and a phalanx of numerous other top talents, this is an excellent satire of how the media is used to control a nation that's willing to believe anything that's advertised well enough. Proof, if any was needed, that television has made democracy obsolete. You will never look at the news in the same way again. **FEATURES:** Dual layer disc, Director's Commentary, Cast and crew biographies, Theatrical trailers, Interviews.

MOVIE SCORE: 8/10 DISC SCORE: 7/10

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01

STAR WARS!

JEDI POWER BATTLES COMP

This awesome competition closes June 20th, 2000.

Mow down the little Jawas! Show the Sandpeople what for! Bring out The Phantom Menace on DVD!!!

Hey, don't run away yet! This month, with thanks to *Playcorp, Australian Station* will be giving away 10 copies of their awesome new Star Wars title, *Jedi Power Battles*! That's right, ten lucky readers whose envelope is picked out of our pile of competition entries will be amongst the first to own the first 'good' Star Wars Episode 1 videogame (For our detailed review, see page 56). Plus, five of these lucky winners will also get a copy of *The Phantom Menace* to own on video!

So what is *Jedi Power Battles*? It's basically the best videogame based on *The Phantom Menace* made to date. Playing as any one of your favourite Jedi masters, you will be able to romp through a series of levels based on all the locations from the film, allowing you to pull off many trademark sword-swinging moves in this side-scrolling hack 'n slash adventure.

In order to be in the running to win a copy of this awesome game, just answer this simple question:

WHO SHOULD GET A LIGHTSABRE IN THE BACK IN EPISODE 2?

- (A) JAR JAR BINKS
- (B) BOSS NASS
- (C) QUEEN AMIDALA
- (D) LEONARDO DI CAPRIO



Put your answer on the back of an envelope (don't forget your name and return address!) and send it to:

JEDI POWER BATTLES COMP

c/o- Station Magazine
Level 6, 418a Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



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Feature

PlayStation 2



PlayStation



tion 2

When it comes to next-generation machines, anyone can throw a stack of technical specifications at you. The last few months have no doubt been filled with questions about what the future holds - what the PlayStation 2 can do - and how Sony intends to follow up on the most successful console of the 32-bit era. In fact, the Japanese public that was so aware of the console's impending release that Sony decided not to advertise too much for it!

So what is it like? Rather than providing you with a boring spiel about what the machine can do on paper, we let the machine and its games speak for themselves. The PlayStation 2 is now a reality, in Japan at least, and the dedicated crew at Australian Station are here to provide you with the results of Australia's first real down-to-earth in-depth road test of the PlayStation 2.

WORDS *Kevin Cheung, Amos Wong, James Cottee,*

PICTURES *Scott Wajon, Amos Wong.*

IT IS HERE!

That's right, folks, the PlayStation 2 is a reality. It's here, it's in the flesh, and at 3kg in weight, it's the heaviest and most solid block of gaming goodness. Bear in mind, though, that the PlayStation 2 is actually not due for release in Australia for another good few months. Various whispers in the industry are suggesting that Sony Computer Entertainment Australia is aiming for an October 2000 launch - which will be quite a delicate exercise considering the marketing and shipping complications that are created by the Sydney 2000 Olympics in September, and the subsequent Para-Olympics in November. The ideal situation, of course, is that the PlayStation 2 will be ready to roll in time for Christmas 2000.

In the meantime, Australian Station will be providing you with all of the latest in what's happening with the PlayStation 2, just as we have been doing ever since news of the system came to light. We will be closely following and analysing the progress of the PlayStation 2 and its software in the foreign markets so that when our turn for the PlayStation 2 arrives, you will be fully up to spec on what's out there, what to look for, and where best to spend your money.

To that end, we sent our troops deep into the heart of Akihabara for the Japanese launch of the PlayStation 2. We fought through the crowds, we joined the queues that wrapped around entire city blocks, we took turns monitoring our spot in the line for 2 nights while we took turns getting food and going for a toilet break... but it was all worth it. The PlayStation 2's in every store disappeared within minutes of the launch, with around 1 million units sold both online and through retail outlets in the space of three days. The demand is so high for the machine, in fact, that some stores are offering to BUY BACK the PlayStation 2's at a higher price than what they were originally selling for! At any rate, the PlayStation 2 is now in our hands, and we have got it running in our office games room.

Have we been blown away by the PlayStation 2? To be perfectly honest, not quite. And mind you, that wasn't an easy decision for the Station staff to come to. No, it's not that the machine is bad or anything like that - it's more because the launch titles for the PlayStation 2 didn't quite blow us away as much as we would have hoped. This is, however, an understandable situation: all of the PlayStation 2's launch titles were rushed through a meagre 8 month production period, which allowed virtually no time for developers to get to know the new hardware properly. Realistically, there was no way for developers to produce any more than they did.

However, the launch software has opened our eyes to the fantastic possibilities for software that's developed with a little more time, and with the benefit of a little more hindsight. Even as we speak, developers across Europe and the United States are refining their own titles with substantially more time in their hands to play with. By the time the PlayStation 2 is ready for launch here in Australia, it will be nothing short of perfect.



THE BIG CRUSH

THE BIG CRUSH

PS2 JAPANESE LAUNCH

You really had to be in a coma in Tokyo to be oblivious to the PlayStation 2's March 4 launch. Post PlayStation Festival 2000, Merrill Lynch and Warberg Dillon Read analysts commented on Sony's strategy and their new console's impact on the gaming/home entertainment industry in the local newspapers, alongside the saturation of gaming magazine coverage. A long trail of minimalist logo billboards stretched alongside a train platform at Takadanobaba (a University district) and an even larger one at trend central Shibuya got prime position: nobody walking towards the station could possibly miss it. Latenight TV programs totally unrelated to gaming ran features about the campouts around electronic heaven Akihabara mid week before the Saturday launch, showing store staff pleading in vain with eager gamers to go home. They also visited Sony's HQ for interviews; the usual programming content of the city's more 'exotic' entertainment just had to wait.

The Akihabara crowd mayhem made the morning TV news headlines on launch day Saturday. Meanwhile in Shinjuku and Ikebukuro's popular electronics stores Sakuraya and Bic Camera, customers braved the rain, patiently lining up along the narrow streets for their reserved unit. Shop staff at Bic Camera directed customers to a nearby underground walkway out of the rain, until the people ahead picked up their units.

While Ken Kutaragi assured gamers weeks before that plenty of hardware would be available regardless of preorders, the reality was many without a reservation had to take their chances in Akihabara's lines or go on a 1 1/2 hour trip to more obscure stores in Chiba city in the hope of getting their hands on one. Newspapers reported the sob story of a schoolboy who had diligently saved up for a PlayStation 2, only to have it snatched from him shortly after purchase.

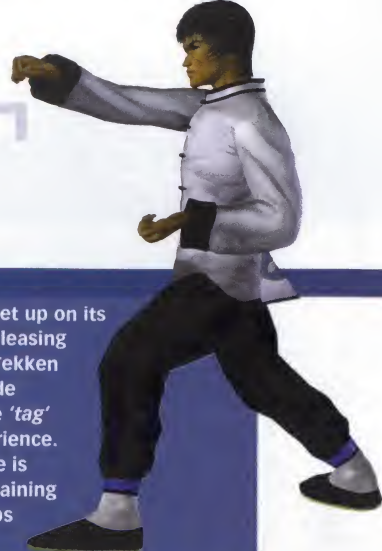
The machine has literally been a crowd stopper. Even a week or two post launch, people milled around the shop windows or units in game stores, mesmerised by the monitors running Ridge Racer V or the flashier titles. Popular TV programs sponsored by game companies are still getting the PlayStation 2 treatment. Sunday night show Asayan, springboard for current unstoppable girl group Morning Musume has its ad time filled with Square's Driving Emotion Type S!

There's been many media comments about the unit's possible contribution to opening up the local DVD market, despite that ironically for



GOD THEY ARE KEEN!

The PlayStation 2 has barely had enough time to get up on its own two feet, and game companies are already releasing 3rd party and other associated merchandise. For Tekken Tag Tournament alone, there is a new custom-made Tekken Tag Arcade Stick, incorporating the unique 'tag' button for a perfect emulation of the arcade experience. And in the fine tradition of Japanese gaming, there is already a massive official guide book on sale, containing loads of gorgeous artwork, as well as hints and tips on how to play the game.



the country that developed the format, DVDs here are at least twice as expensive as in Australia or the USA. Indeed post launch, DVDs have taken up a bigger presence at many stores. Shibuya's huge multi-levelled Tsutaya store cleared its entire ground floor CD floor space to make way for DVD displays and TV monitors. The recent release of The Matrix on the format has resulted in shop window displays in Akihabara directly linking the PlayStation 2 with the anime derived blockbuster.

Towards the end of the month at the time of writing, the soon to be released Dead or Alive 2 is making its presence felt in many stores - the posters are rather fetching, after all. 'PlayStation 2 sold out' signs can still be seen; upon discovering that Ikebukuro's Bic Camera was to receive new stock, people were waiting outside by 7.30am: the shop actually opened half an hour earlier to accommodate these customers. Meanwhile, I am still without the much fangled machine; donations so that I could get a PlayStation 2 would be graciously accepted.



Games

THE Games

FLASHY NEW DISCS

The PlayStation 2 is compatible with both CD and DVD formats of information storage, thanks to a proprietary lens that's been developed by Sony to handle both formats. At this stage, the bulk of the PlayStation 2's software releases are in CD format - similar to the existing PlayStation format, but by no means implying you can play a

PlayStation 2 game in your old PlayStation. However, unlike the PlayStation's familiar old black discs, the PlayStation 2 discs will now feature a distinctive fluoro-blue backing.

DVD games for the PlayStation 2, however, will not feature this blue colouring. Instead, they are in the plain silver colour that all standard DVDs come in.

As of this writing, only Kessen and Dead Or Alive 2 are in DVD format. Readers should note, however, that being

programmed in the DVD format doesn't necessarily mean that the game will be 'better' by nature. Not by a long shot. All it means is that it can store more game information - holding around 4.6 gigabytes of information as compared to 650 megabytes on CD-ROM.



NEW BOXES?

At present, all PlayStation 2 games in Japan are released in boxes that look identical to DVD boxes. The only difference is that there is a slot inside the box that can hold a memory card. Whilst Sony of Australia haven't confirmed what style of boxes they will be using for our local launch, there are obvious benefits for such a design. PlayStation 2 games will be able to sit side by side with your DVD collection, and when you come home from a hard day's work, you will be able to ask yourself, "Hmm... should I go passive? Active? Passive?..." As far as the PlayStation 2 is concerned, it makes no difference as it plays DVDs anyway, making it one of the first true set-top box entertainment units for your lounge room.

It would certainly be an idea if Sony of Australia were to retain this DVD-style box. For one thing, it would certainly make it easier to be accepted by consumers at large if the software came in a familiar casing that didn't require the purchase of a brand new storage cabinet. One need only look at the initial complications created when Sony decided to make the old PlayStation game boxes of a different size and shape to the standard CD jewel case.



Game Titles



RIDGE RACER V

Easily the best title available at launch, featuring the best graphics, control, and overall execution, RRV rocketed directly to the number one spot in all Japanese sales charts. On one hand, the game is the best and toughest Ridge Racer game Namco have ever produced; but on the other hand, the fact that the game didn't utilise enough of the PlayStation 2's capabilities meant it didn't have the

look of a 'killer app'. With plenty of in-jokes and graphical humour (look out for the Pac-man references), the game is very playable on all counts, and there's no doubting that it will satisfy every Ridge Racer fan out there. Read the full review on page 48!

HESSEN

Being a war simulation, nobody had high expectations for this game. In fact, the amount of Japanese dialogue was so thick in the opening FMV that we ended up finding James' ad-lib voice-over using the Monkey Magic opening monologue more entertaining. Given a little patience, however, this game turned out to be a pretty deep yet traditional strategy game. Never mind all the hype that's been made of the incredible movies or the hundreds of characters being rendered on screen - you only get to see them very sporadically. See more of what we think about it so far on page 74.



STREET FIGHTER EX 3

Even though it literally flew up the top 10 charts in Japan hand in hand with Ridge Racer V, Street Fighter EX 3 was surprisingly disappointing. Using traditional Street Fighter gameplay with the added novelty of extra team members, Street Fighter EX 3, at best, looked like a PlayStation game running on high resolution. The irony is that at this high a resolution - and with such little effort in increasing

the texture detail of the characters - they all look like freakish marionettes! However, even though the game is disappointing from a technical level, it still remains quite an enjoyable experience especially if you're into the Street Fighter groove.



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

One of the first post-launch titles for the PlayStation 2, and it's easily the best of the lot so far. Featuring all the classic characters from the Tekken series in a new tag-team battle system, Tekken Tag Tournament is a dream come true for every fan alive. If you thought Soul Calibur on the Dreamcast was a big improvement on the arcades, just wait until you see how much better this is than its own arcade counterpart. For starters, it features the most amazing 3D modelling ever seen in a fighting game - where each character is made up of a whopping 10,000 polygons! Factor that in with extra costumes, multiple ending movies, and a hidden bowling game, Tekken Tag Tournament is the best title so far on the PlayStation 2. Find out more in our massive review on page 56!



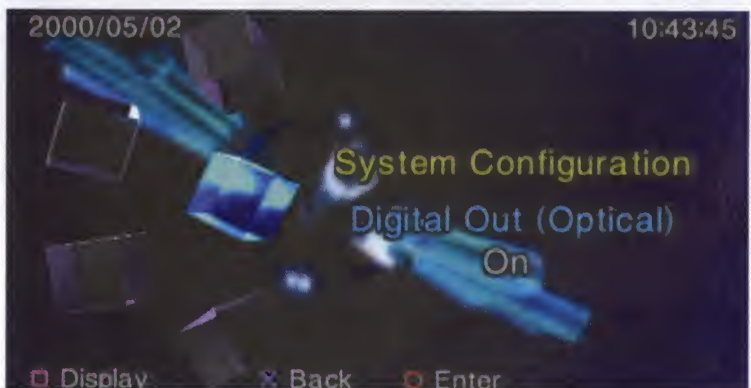
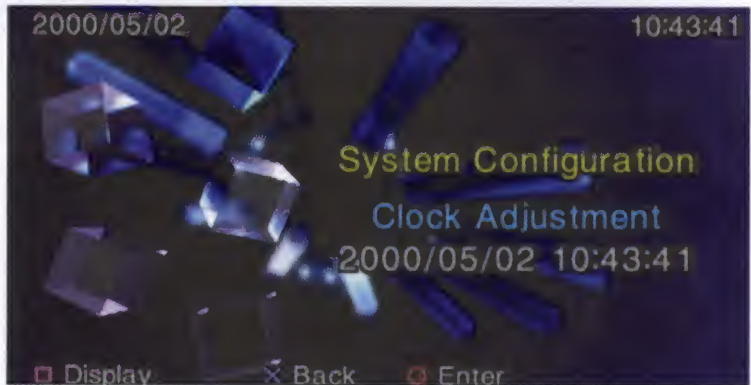
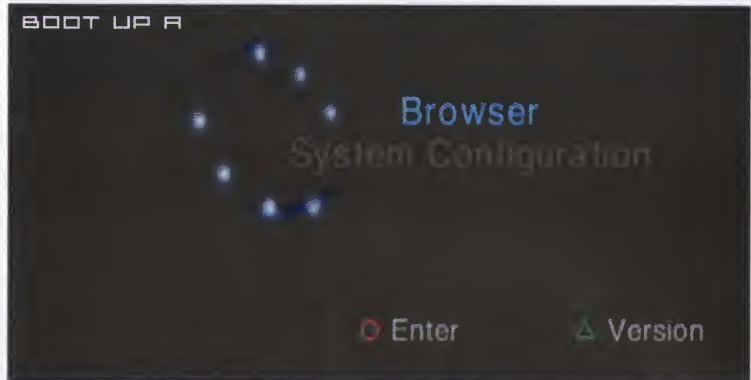
BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE...

- **FANTAVISION:** Fireworks puzzle game that shows off the hardware's impressive lighting capabilities.
- **IQ REMIX +:** A return of one of Japan's most popular and original puzzle games, aka Kurushi to the West.
- **A6:** Train sim game like the classic Railroad Tycoon series but in a city environment.
- **DEAD OR ALIVE 2:** Sequel to one of the best 3D fighting games ever made, the reputation of which is overshadowed by its bounciness.
- **DRUM MANIA:** Just like Beatmania, but with a drum set.
- **STREET MAHJONG TRANCE GOD 2:** Classic Chinese 'card' game with lots of coloured tiles, all in high-res. Watch as we jump for joy.
- **GOLF PARADISE:** A cartoonish approach to the golf genre, much like the Everybody's Golf series.
- **DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S:** A collaborative effort by Squaresoft and Escape in an ambitious attempt to redefine the driving genre.
- **ETERNAL RING:** 3rd person action/RPG that turned out to be, by unanimous vote, the worst game available at launch.

BOOT UP MAYHEM

The boot-up screen on the PlayStation 2 is constantly evolving. It starts out with a couple of cubes floating in a dark mist; and as you use the system more, the number of cubes will gradually increase. After that, there's lots of funky stars, English language options, and even widescreen settings to boot!

BOOT UP A



What is in the box?

8 MEG MEMORY CARD

Similar to the PlayStation's standard memory cards, this new model was designed for the PlayStation 2 to store your game save files. However, these memory cards can store eight times more information than before, and they are even used to store special operations files such as the DVD drivers. The memory card is no larger than the existing PlayStation memory cards. The corners aren't as rounded, but they essentially look the same.

THE 8MEG SCARE

Even though the launch of the PlayStation 2 was a massive success, it didn't go by without a few hiccups. The biggest scare during the launch was the discovery of faulty memory cards, which automatically erased the DVD Driver file if you tried to save a Ridge Racer V file on it. This bug didn't affect every memory card that was packed in with the PlayStation 2's, but Sony nevertheless ordered an immediate recall of all 8 Meg Memory Cards so the fault could be corrected. Everyone got back a working memory card, hence averting any possible consumer backlash. Anyone who was worried about losing their DVD drivers could also just reload it into their memory cards from the PlayStation 2 Utility Disc which came boxed with the machine.





SHOCK 2

Looking almost identical to the existing Dual Shock pad for PlayStation, the Dual Shock 2 sports several incredible new features that aren't discernible to the naked eye. Firstly, the analogue thumb pads now have several extra levels of analogue, meaning the control and movement of what's on the screen will be even more precise than what you're experiencing now. The thumbpads are also slightly tighter than before, which lessens the chance of accidentally pressing in a wrong direction. Secondly, the Δ , \square , \circ , and \times buttons all have some analogue properties. For instance, in Ridge Racer V, it means you can do anything from feathering the brakes to fully slamming down on them. The Dual Shock 2 is also much lighter than the standard Dual Shock pad, which is incredible considering how much more technology they have packed into the shell.

THE UTILITY DISC

Literally a collector's item amongst the hardcore gamers, this utility disc contains all the system drivers that are required to run the PlayStation 2. All of the information is already stored in your memory card, so this disc is here just in case you accidentally wipe it out. The information on this disc includes the now infamous version 1.00 of the PlayStation 2 DVD drivers, which Sony have since upgraded for a slightly less 'ahem' buggy performance. Find out why in the DVD section of this feature.

Will the PS2 Rule the Videogame World?

Whatever happens when the PlayStation 2 is released, it is assured of success in the videogames market by virtue of the fact that its name, PlayStation, carries such a wide recognition in society at large. The question is the measure by which we gauge this success.

In the world market, the PlayStation 2 faces stiff competition not only from the Sega Dreamcast, but also from Nintendo's upcoming Dolphin and Microsoft's X-Box. Other competitors to watch will be Indrema's Linux-based console and the long-fabled Nuon. With videogames now generally accepted as a mainstream past time, it's of little surprise that the market should be expanding so rapidly from what was traditionally only a 'war' between Nintendo and Sega ten years ago. Considering it was Sony that popularised videogames for the mass market through aggressive marketing and publicity, the question for them to answer is whether they will be able to expand on their original marketing formula. Current industry trends indicate that Sega's Dreamcast faces a grim future, with many third party developers abandoning Dreamcast projects in favour of developing titles for the PlayStation 2.

In some industry circles, it has been stipulated that the market may simply be using the Dreamcast as a 'transitional format' while we wait for the PlayStation 2. In contrast, the Dreamcast's position is somewhat stronger in Japan owing to a more diverse and arcade-based software line-up.

The X-Box is perhaps the unknown factor in the PlayStation 2's future, being more powerful than any console ever seen before. However, the X-Box is more than a year away from launch, and by that time, its specs could very well end up looking quite ordinary to its largely PC-based audience. The same could be said for Nintendo's Dolphin, which won't be released until well into 2001. With such a time difference between the launch of these two machines and the PlayStation 2, they could carve out mutually exclusive gaming markets of their own without biting too deeply into each other.

In Australia, the situation is slightly different, and is a little more favourable. The PlayStation 2 faces substantially less competition from the Sega Dreamcast, which has reportedly shifted less than 20,000 units since its 'with a whisper' launch in November 1999, and subsequent relaunch in March.

This is not to say that the PlayStation 2's future is going to be rosy. The biggest challenge being faced by the PlayStation 2 is the complexity of its hardware and some of its space limitations, which will ultimately make programming for the machine complicated. Such complications may in turn deter companies from developing games for the machine. If the PlayStation's success is any example to follow by, then the support of third party developers - and the games they make - are of paramount importance to the PlayStation 2's future success.



Up Close The PlayStation 2



FUNKY LIGHTS

When switched on, the PlayStation 2 has two lights that are clearly visible to anyone sitting in front of it. There is a green light for the power switch (which turns red when the machine is switched to standby mode) and a blue light for the CD tray. Whether standing vertically or resting in the more traditional horizontal position, the surreal blue light is what every single person comments on, especially when you're playing in the dark.

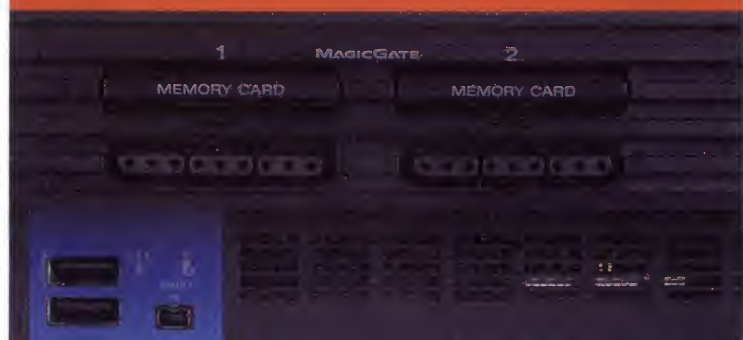
GOT A HOME THEATRE? (DTS SOUND)

At the back of the PlayStation 2 is a digital output for 5.1 channel surround sound. With the right set-up at home, this makes the PlayStation 2 perfect for your home theatre DVD enjoyment. Plus your games will sound incredible.



PLUG AND PLAY!

Located at the front of the PlayStation 2 is a panel where all the USB and other related ports can be accessed. This will allow for future upgrades to your PlayStation 2 such as hard drives, cable networks, and so on.



PlayStation 2 DVD

APPROACHING THE WORLD OF THE SET-TOP BOX

Much has been made of the PlayStation 2's ability to play DVDs. The PlayStation 2 is not strictly a DVD player like the ones you buy in your local hi-fi or department store. The PlayStation 2 simply facilitates DVD playback, which is achieved through a DVD Driver program. This is similar to the way DVD playback operates on a PC, where you have to use DVD software saved into your hard drive in order to watch DVD movies. On the PlayStation 2, the DVD drivers are stored on the 8 meg memory card. As time goes on, superior DVD software will be created for the PlayStation 2 that can be uploaded in exactly the same fashion.

HOW DO YOU CONTROL THESE DUDES?

With the control pad. It actually feels downright retarded considering the control pad has a fat wire connected to the PlayStation 2, and unless you're prepared to memorise the button allocations, you are going to have to contend with a hideously abstract menu system that appears on screen at the press of a button. But fear not: Sony intends to release an infra-red remote control for the PlayStation 2 in the very near future.

PLAYSTATION 2 DVD CONTROVERSY

The PlayStation 2 ran into several problems with its DVD capabilities. The first major problem was the fact that a bug in the driver program allows you to enter a code during the boot-up sequence that would allow you to play DVDs from other regions. This obviously caused a stir in Hollywood and the rest of the film industry, which has fought tooth and nail to abolish multi-region players. Sony have since issued a recall of all PlayStation 2 Utility Discs so that new Utility Discs with upgraded DVD drivers can be loaded into all PlayStation 2s. Of course, these new driver programs have fixed all the bugs and also provide superior picture and sound quality.

The other problem encountered by the PlayStation 2's DVD capability was its susceptibility to piracy. Well, sort of. Since the PlayStation 2 is capable of analogue RGB output, it's possible to bypass the Macrovision safeguards and record DVD video on to a VHS tape. This is another function the film industry banned from DVD players, which the PlayStation 2 only performed incidentally since it is designed as a videogames machine. Even though VHS picture quality is strikingly inferior to anything on DVD, Sony and all games developers are working towards resolving this problem with the film industry.



Backwards Compatibility



Compatibility

BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY:

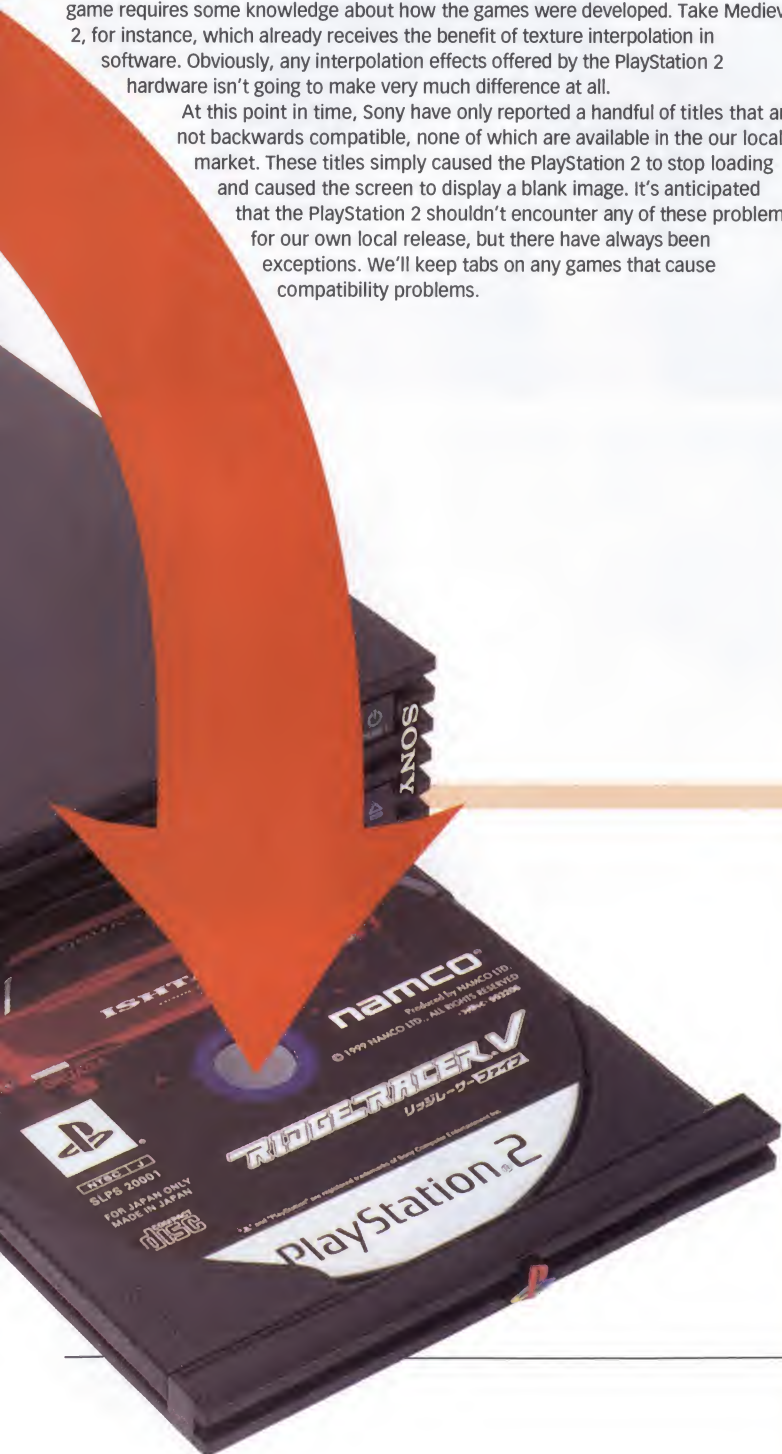
DON'T THROW OUT YOUR PLAYSTATION YET!

The PlayStation 2 is backwards compatible. This means you can still play your old PlayStation games on your PlayStation 2. This is made possible partly by the fact that the PlayStation 2 hardware makes use of the same I/O (input/output) interface as the PlayStation. This also means it's possible to keep on using your existing digital and Dual Shock pads on the PlayStation 2.

The PlayStation 2 also makes it possible to improve the overall performance of your existing PlayStation games. By accessing the right menus on the PlayStation 2 operating system, you can speed up the speed of the CD drive, which will obviously reduce the loading times. Games such as Street Fighter Alpha 2, which took 18 seconds on average between each match, now takes less than 10 seconds. It is also possible to activate "smooth" textures. This is a switch that allows the PlayStation 2 hardware to "interpolate" the textures in any of your 3D games. Basically, it's a form of "filtering" that makes textures look softer and less jagged or blocky.

There are other aspects of these games that are improved. In some games, for instance, all clipping and seaming is eliminated; whilst at other times, there can literally be no discernible improvement. While this may appear to be a random phenomenon, one's appreciation of the kinds of improvement experienced by each game requires some knowledge about how the games were developed. Take *Medieval 2*, for instance, which already receives the benefit of texture interpolation in software. Obviously, any interpolation effects offered by the PlayStation 2 hardware isn't going to make very much difference at all.

At this point in time, Sony have only reported a handful of titles that are not backwards compatible, none of which are available in the our local market. These titles simply caused the PlayStation 2 to stop loading and caused the screen to display a blank image. It's anticipated that the PlayStation 2 shouldn't encounter any of these problems for our own local release, but there have always been exceptions. We'll keep tabs on any games that cause compatibility problems.



Controls

PLAYSTATION 2 BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY

The PlayStation 2's backwards compatibility should put many peripheral owners' hearts to rest. Cool toys like the JogCon, arcade sticks, and even the old NegCon will still work. In fact, some games on the PlayStation 2 are even being programmed to work with these alternative controllers. *Ridge Racer V*, for instance, is compatible with the Dual Shock Pad, the NegCon, and the JogCon - not to mention the numerous steering wheels that share those functions.



Final Say

The Experts Get Their Final Say

KEVIN CHEUNG

AUSTRALIAN STATION EDITOR

As excited and hyped up as we may be, next-gen systems always represent evolution, not revolution. The PS2 is no exception. Anyone who bought into the misguided belief that the PS2 would be ten times better than the Dreamcast just because it can generate ten times more polygons is gearing him or herself up for disappointment. There are more factors to how a console runs than just polygon generation, such as RAM, bus bandwidth, and so on. So far, none of the launch titles for the PS2 have utilised anything beyond its main processor, and they all reflect as such. They're good, but nowhere near as good as what the PS2 is capable of; nor do they 'blow the competition away', so to speak. On the bright side, they provide a glimpse of the incredible magic promised by the PS2. This promise is gaining substantial credibility since the post-launch releases like Tekken Tag Tournament and Dead Or Alive 2 are clearly breaking new ground and getting over the PS2's teething problems. It will only be a matter of time before developers utilise the Emotion Engine and graphics synthesiser to full effect, and THEN we'll have a clearer picture of the PS2's future. Until then, don't believe the hype!



ELIOT FISH

HYPER EDITOR

After obsessing over the PS2 for months, it was no great surprise that it didn't live up to my expectations. First impressions upon seeing Ridge Racer V in action for the first time? Underwhelming. It just looked like a high end accelerated PC game. In fact, after seeing Ridge Racer V, I must admit that Sega GT on the Dreamcast is looking almost as good. Of course, the Dreamcast is into its second generation of games, and we're seeing only launch titles here on the PS2 and launch titles are generally rushed because of the strict deadline. Personally, I love the look of the PS2 and there's still a lot of anticipation for some upcoming titles like Dark Cloud and Tekken Tag Tournament. But I think it's going to be a much tighter console war than I had previously believed...



JAMES COTTEE

AUSTRALIAN STATION ACTING DEPUTY EDITOR

The system has a nice outer casing. It's stylish, slim, intimidating and very, very 80s. But within this imposing exterior I can see a wall of limitations that the coders of PS2 games are going to have to work around in order to give us what we want. 36 megs of RAM? Hello? Can anyone spell bottleneck? Also there's the fact that the first production run of machines didn't have a groovy light display built in to accompany CD playback. This cheesy function is on the PlayStation and can turn your bedroom into a roller disco at the flick of a switch! Hopefully they will include it as standard before long. Quibbles aside, the lineup of software we're going to get for the local launch will rock the Casbar. Tekken Tag, Dead Or Alive 2, Munch and WipeOut 4 are killer apps that will make the PS2 a must-have. Even Ridge Racer V overcomes a problem that has plagued racing games for years - The palm trees do not all look the same! Once you add the DVD movie factor, the PS2 is looking like the hot home entertainment item for the next decade!

DAVID WILDOGOOSE

PC POWERPLAY NEWS EDITOR

Underwhelmed is perhaps the kindest way to describe my initial reaction to the PS2. No doubt this will change in the future - Onimusha, Dark Cloud, Munch's Oddysee and The Bouncer, in particular, all hold some immense promise - but the first batch of titles still does strike me as surprisingly weak. Running through the few games that I have seen thus far, we have a sleeker, prettier Ridge Racer (though the overt sexual metaphor in the opening cut-scene did bring a smile to my lips), a bafflingly niche war game (Kessen), and a feeble take on the Street Fighter formula (just what is with that awful, eye-straining parallax?). It all adds up to a distinctly sub-spectacular beginning. Sure, Tekken Tag Tournament looks kinda nice, but there's nothing new.

Wake me when someone manages to harness the obvious power of the machine's graphics chip - or, better still, explores bolder game designs. Then I might start becoming impressed.



CAM SHER
HYPER DEPUTY EDITOR

Sexy new kit, or spoilt Sony slut? The shift from 16 to 32bit machines brought with it the revolutionary change from 2D to 3D game mechanics. Moving into the 128bit generation, however, will be more of an evolutionary step for the developers to consolidate their 3D skills. Thus, you would expect with such juiced up hardware and A-grade developers, that the PS2 would rock very hard indeed. Not yet.

When we booted up Ridge Racer V all I could say was "you've got to be kidding me... this is it?". It barely scratches the surface of what the machine can do. Only now are the truly impressive titles starting to come in - Tekken Tag being the most noteworthy so far. By the time the Aussie launch rolls around, there should be a very strong lineup to show off the machine, so at least that's one positive in being years behind the Japanese market.



NARRAYAN PATTISON
N64 GAMER EDITOR

After incredible hype, Sony's PS2 has finally been released. With all the talk of the machine having more power than Sega's Dreamcast, I was expecting the games to destroy current DC software. But looking at Ridge Racer V (the most impressive launch title) it's more a case of "Oh yeah, I see what you mean. That bit does look sort of nice." While there are elements of the game's graphics that people with keen eyes will notice are beyond the capabilities of Sega's machine; for the most part the title looks merely like a slick DC game. So far the PS2 scene can be described as offering games that play painfully familiarly and that look nice, but by no means amazing.



ARTHUR ADAM
N64 GAMER SENIOR WRITER

The hype surrounding the PS2 gave us all the notion that Sony's new super-console would be some colossal elephant charging down all competitors and stomping them into the ground with its big feet. Unfortunately, the PS2 bears more of a resemblance to a wounded asthmatic elephant struggling to remove a peanut stuck to its forehead. For starters, the line up of games is somewhat feeble. Ridge Racer V is unexcitingly bland. Street Fighter EX3 is also bollocks. This, with the fact that there are rumours relating to the difficulty in programmers being able to fully utilise performance from the machine, has dampened my anticipation for Sony's new console. Hopefully these are just teething problems and the PS2 will kick some booty in the near future. Oh well, I will just have to look forward to Perfect Dark and Nintendo's Dolphin.



LITTLE DETAILS WE NOTICED THAT ONLY A TECH-FREAK WOULD UNDERSTAND

- Most of the games we've seen on the PS2 generates the on-screen image by splicing two separate images together to create a whole. Through 'resolution halving', each frame displayed on your TV is made from two fields of 640x240 images that flow into each other - hence creating the full 640x480 image. The transition is generally not discernible to the naked eye, but not so for our computers that take screenshots. Many screenshots you see in publication aren't truly representative of what it looks like on TV, as the two fields often fall out of synch and create a jagged interlaced effect. Since Tekken Tag has eliminated this, we suspect it to be a programming quibble that will disappear with time.
- In some rare instances, minute portions of the on-screen image appear to flicker. This has more to do with the current television standard, whose current configuration of scan-lines can't display all of the tiny polygons being shifted around by the PS2. This problem will most likely disappear with the introduction of digital TV.

NETWORK NEXT

GET ONLINE WITH AUSTRALIAN STATION AT NETWORK NEXT!



In case you haven't heard yet, *Australian Station* now has a second new and exciting home on the Internet! As part of the NEXTgaming channel on **NetworkNext.com**, *Australian Station* is working on bringing you the latest news, reviews and previews on everything there is to know about the PlayStation - as well as all the late-breaking information about this year's hottest item, the PlayStation 2!

"Ho hum, just another website," you might be thinking, but with the combined might of *Australian Station*, Complete Solutions for PlayStation, and the rest of the Next Gaming staff, this is going to be anything but!

With more next generation consoles on the horizon and PC technology changing all the time it's becoming increasingly important to stay informed in order to make the right gaming choices. Of course, you should already know about the PlayStation 2 and all the fantastic games coming out on it, but how does it fit in with everything else? What of the Dolphin (or whatever it becomes) or the X-Box? What about the Dreamcast or the Game Boy Advance? If you want to keep up with the latest rumours and news, then **NetworkNext.com** is the place to be. We have all the answers there.



What can you expect to find?

Reports from conferences, exhibitions and official announcements, as they happen, will inform you of all the latest goings on - new technology demos, game footage and hands-on impressions, all updated hourly/daily; The scoop on everything coming out of Europe, the US and Japan. As the PlayStation 2 approaches and the end of the 32-bit generation comes closer, you'll be seeing more hands on coverage of what the new console's games are going to be like so you'll be ready for the big launch.

Pics, movie files, sound files... this is where NetworkNext takes you beyond the simple text and images you see in our regular issues. Plus, there'll be no

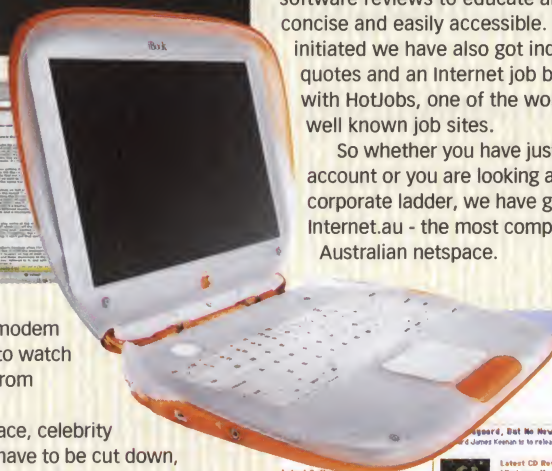
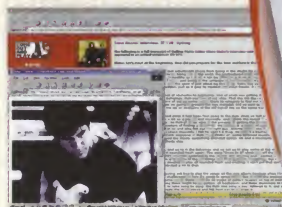
waiting around for the monthly magazine to hit the stands, you can check out the latest screens for Tekken Tag Tournament, Munch's Oddysee, Wipeout Fusion and other juicy titles in development for the PlayStation 2 as soon as they're available.

And while you are at it why not pretty up your PC with wallpaper, themes and screensavers featuring your favourite videogame characters. Crash, Cloud, Squall, Reiko Nagase, Jill Valentine, the Dead Or Alive girls, Lara in yet another revealing and compromising position... they can all be accessed from the downloads section. There's a comprehensive reviews archive, and if that's not enough incentive for you, how about cheats, hints and playguides too? If it's PlayStation, you can find it on **NetworkNext.com**.



NetworkNext: Your One-stop Online Community

NetworkNext's other great channels include the online home of Rolling Stone Australia and Internet.au, the ultimate source of information on Australia's burgeoning Net culture and industry. Also coming soon is Screen, with movie and TV listings, film previews and reviews, DVD, Sci-Fi and more.



modem or ISDN link. Most modem connections will allow you to watch and listen to the best acts from Australia and overseas.

Often for the sake of space, celebrity interviews in Rolling Stone have to be cut down, but online we can bring you the full transcript. Check out feature interviews, including Trent Reznor, Killing Heidi and The Chemical Brothers, with more being added all the time.

Rolling Stone online's extensive database of artist biographies has got all of the answer to annoying trivia questions like "Who was Pearl Jam's first drummer" and our CD reviews often come complete with track listings and also with some recommended tracks. Just about everything that a music buff could want can be found on **NetworkNext.com**, and if it's not covered yet, then it probably will be soon.



Rolling Stone Australia Online

Rolling Stone Australia Online features all the best bits about the magazine - authoritative reviews, music news and gossip and the best interviews around, but now you can get mp3s and streaming video of your favourite bands, too.

Frenzal Rhomb, TISM, Sonic Animation and Machine Gun Fellatio are just some of the acts online now, with more being added all the time. Music videos as well as extensive live footage can be streamed onto your screen with the Windows Media Player plug-in, which doesn't require a fast cable



Internet.au online

Internet.au caters for everyone from the Net newbie to industry analysts. With various tutorials and software reviews to educate and inform, the site is concise and easily accessible. But for the already initiated we have also got industry interviews, stock quotes and an Internet job board in association with HotJobs, one of the world's biggest and most well known job sites.

So whether you have just got your first e-mail account or you are looking at moving up the corporate ladder, we have got it covered. Internet.au - the most comprehensive site in Australian netspace.

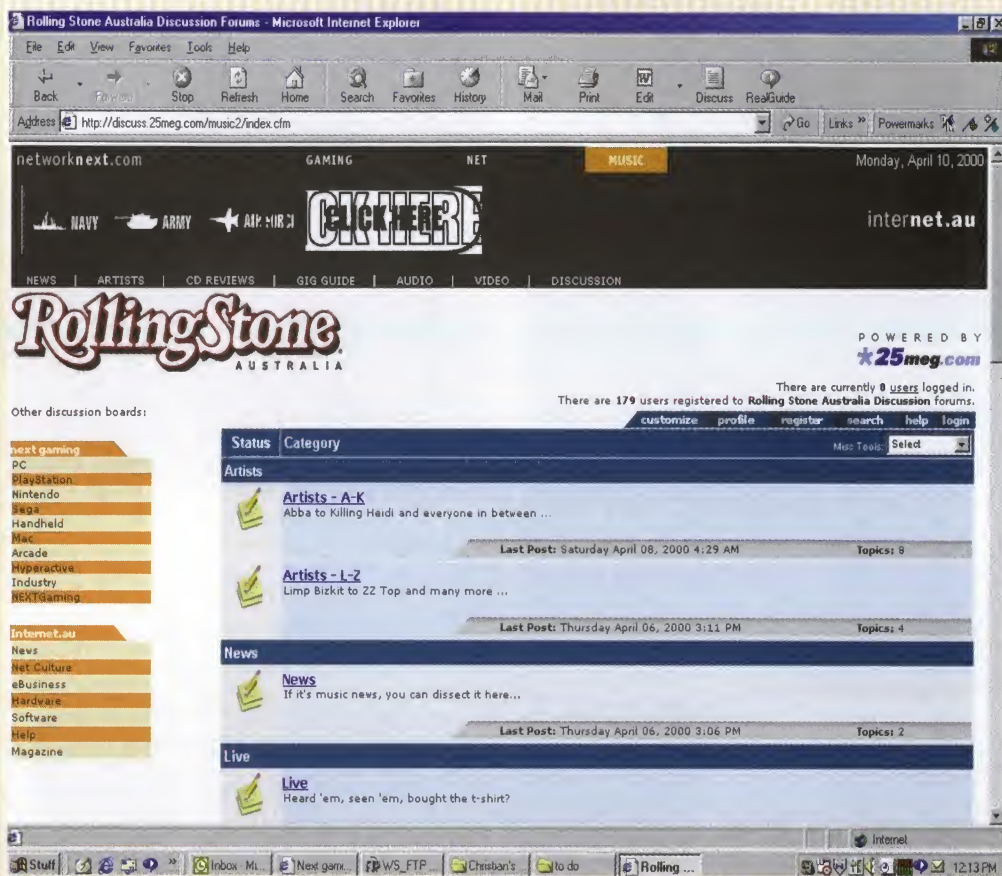


Hyperactive 3.1

NetworkNext's early beginnings can be traced back to 1995, where Hyperactive was and remains Australia's premiere gaming site - being directly linked to Next Gaming's flagship multiformat magazine, Hyper.

Hyperactive has always had all the fine things that you would want from an Internet gaming site - news, previews, reviews, cheats and codes and competitions. Mmm... free stuff... But now Hyperactive 3.1 is here with more of what you want, and more frequently, too, and it will be there along side *Australian Station* and the rest of **NetworkNext.com** in providing you with everything that there is to know about popular lifestyles and consumer electronics.

*25meg.com



Discuss and be part of the fun!

In association with **25meg.com**, NetworkNEXT features a series of brand new discussion forums where you and millions of other fans across the globe can discuss anything from movies and music to television and videogames.

Rant or rave with a whole world of likeminded people from Sydney to Siberia. Join in spirited debate about the quality of ISPs, learn how to conquer that elusive last level on your favourite game, or have a friendly natter about the joys of sax - there are topics for everyone - and their dog. Our discussion forums are fun and easy to use - simply sign up and you will be posting messages in no time. Here are some of the forums on selection:

Rolling Stone Australia discussion forum

Who should be on the cover of the next issue of Rolling Stone? Who has got THE worst haircut in the world

of music? What's the name of that song that goes. Get it all off your chest by clicking on the Discussion link one the Rolling Stone site or point your browser to <http://discuss.25meg.com/music/index.cfm>

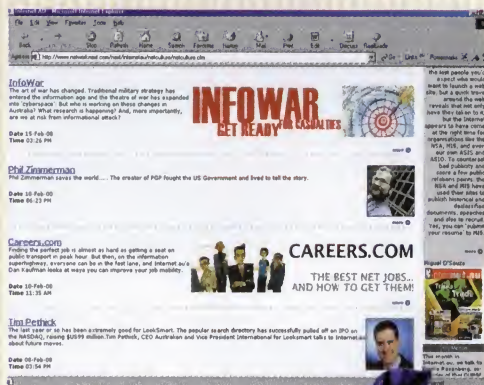
Internet.au discussion forum

Pesky computer playing up again? Got a gripe about the cost of software, the bugs in your browser or the service of your ISP? Can't find the thingumajig to go in the whatsamacallit? Visit the Internet.au discussion forum via the Discussion link on the site or head to <http://discuss.25meg.com/internet/index.cfm>.

NEXTgaming discussion forum

Next level so close and yet so far? In desperate need of a cheat sheet before you go to sleep? Are handhelds a thing of the past or the future in gaming? This is where all you PlayStation and other videogame fans out there will really get your money's worth. Not only will you be able to bounce around ideas on the latest that's out in the industry, but you'll even be able to mingle around with the magazine staff who occasionally visit.

Check on the state of play on the NEXTgaming site by following the links on the site, or visit the boards direct <http://discuss.25meg.com/games/index.cfm>.



NEXTscreen discussion forum

Who has got the best hair in Hollywood? Buffy the Vampire Slayer - cult or crap? Who did win the 1980 Best Actor Oscar? Big screen, small screen - if you can watch it, you can discuss it on NEXTscreen discussion forums -

coming soon to a screen near you. Link from the upcoming Screen channel on networknext or go directly to <http://discuss.25meg.com/screen/index.cfm>.

For more information about the discussion forums on networkNEXT, mail discuss@networknext.com.



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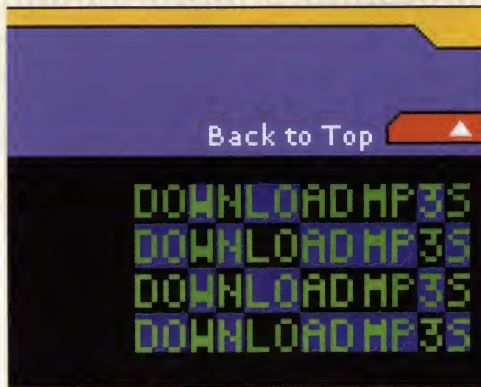
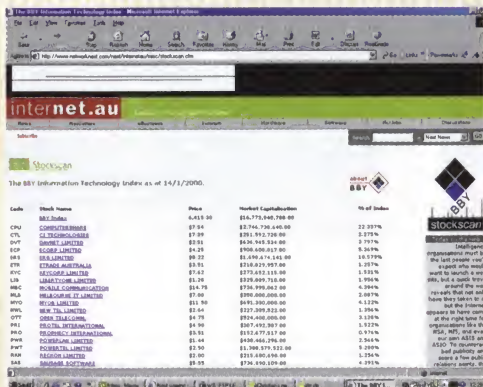
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Look out for regular live chat events with various game developers, famous bands and screen stars. Beginning late April each channel on networknext will be holding moderated chats with celebrities as well as live events like trivia quizzes with lots of great prizes. Make sure that you check out:

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Get some HotJobs at NetworkNext

HotJobs.com.au (www.HotJobs.com.au), the only Internet recruiting site that does not allow any recruitment agencies or headhunters access, has formed an alliance with **NetworkNext.com**, to provide an online recruitment board on the portal, offering site visitors access to all of the latest jobs as well as employment information.

Targeted at the Australian youth market, **NetworkNext.com** is easily accessible, stylish, and an uncomplicated. With HotJobs finding the perfect place of employment will be a snap. Job-seekers can also rest assured that they'll be part of a gigantic employment network that offers its member companies access to the Next Media market - which is perfect for all the Internet savvy people needed in the burgeoning information economy.

It also provides HotJobs the opportunity to rapidly increase its number of resumes on the site.

"The **HotJobs.com.au** site has been receiving as many as 80 new resumes a day. This increases the choice of job seekers that we're able to deliver to our member companies. And by tapping into **NetworkNext.com**, we are ensuring that the quality of resumes we receive is second to none," commented James Garvey, Director, HotJobs.com.au.



"Our relationship with HotJobs adds another level of service to our portal. We believe in a simple online strategy. We intend to aggregate editorial content from our magazines and affiliated sites, add services and build high traffic in concentrated areas of great value to marketers. Next has got a 16-year history of publishing to this demographic. We understand both the youth and online markets. Plus we have the benefit of a loyal, net-savvy subscriber base through publications ranging from Rolling Stone and Next Music to Australian Station and Internet.au," said Michael Darragh, from Next Media.

RIDGE RACER V

The best of the PlayStation2 launch titles, and the best Ridge Racer yet!

PS2 FACTS

- Publisher
Namco
- Developer
Namco
- Genre
Racing
- Release Date
On Import
- Players
One or two
- No. of CD's
TBA
- Features
Dual Shock 2
Meg Memory Card
- PS1 Compatible
Dual Shock
NegCon
JogCon



As Namco was the company that launched the PlayStation into prominence with the original Ridge Racer, it seems rather fitting that Namco should also be the company to usher in the new age of interactive entertainment with the PlayStation 2.

The tradition that Ridge Racer carries behind it is quite powerful, backdating even Gran Turismo as fans looked forward to a new Ridge Racer every Christmas. Not unexpectedly, *Ridge Racer V* was THE hot title to get during the launch of the PS2.

And not without good reason. Nevermind the appeal of the 'Ridge Racer' title - it was easily the strongest title available at launch, amidst a crowd of more niche titles like Street Fighter EX 3, a war sim called Kessen, and a fireworks sim called Fantavision.

And now that the most powerful home console on the face of the planet is sitting on our lap, with *Ridge Racer V* having gone through two weeks of non-stop play, the most difficult question for this reviewer to answer is where to even begin.

COME TO THE LIGHT

From the onset, it should be said that from start to finish *Ridge Racer V* is one of the most gorgeous racing games we've ever seen. The cars are strikingly well modeled, with new real-

Ridge City comes alive, with reflective buildings and vast panoramas



Mmm... Creamy thighs...



See how far away those buildings are? Wow!

time lighting effects breathing a life previously unheard of into them as they bump and grind their way through the winding tracks. Turning a corner during a sunset race, for instance, will cause the screen to be awash with the warm glow of the sunlight. We are not talking about some cheap corona sitting in the middle of the screen with some lens flare

for effect - we are talking about the entire car being bathed in a brilliant yellow light; the kind you squint your eyes at when you are driving home from work.

The game is also frighteningly fast. So fast, in fact, that it took a couple of races before we got used to just the Easy Mode. And even though we technically learned the game 'from scratch', by the time we hit Hard Mode, we were still gripping for dear life to the carpet with our toes as we literally rocketed through all of the turns and the jumps. It's an even bigger rush than WipeOut, and it requires even greater concentration.

GAME STRUCTURE

It would be appropriate to mention here that *Ridge Racer V* is incredibly tough. That's not to say we were intimidated by the speed of the game - but that compared to all of its predecessors, *Ridge Racer V* is the most challenging and demanding yet created. This is all thanks to a fine balance that's been struck



Hot car, cool car. Spot the difference

between the track designs, the realistic physics engine, and the excellent car AI.

Similar to the previous games, the tracks in *Ridge Racer V* consist of three main tracks that branch off into much longer variations. There are also the customary reverse tracks and high speed oval. Each track is brilliantly designed, not only in terms of visual dazzle, but also in terms of how they require you to memorise the gradient of every turn, where not to attempt an overtake, and exactly how much oversteer and countersteer is required for each power-slide.

The strategy involved in each race is further enhanced by the analogue buttons in the Dual Shock 2. For instance, holding down on the X button is the equivalent of flooring it. Pressing it lighter, however, allows you to perform precision moves like maintaining speed as you traverse a long, shallow turn. In fact, little strategies like that can make all the difference between coming first and second: if you simply applied the breaks on such a long, shallow turn, you'd end up skidding and lose speed.

nostalgia value is great, but it's even better when you realise how much of a massive improvement it is over the PlayStation original.

Speaking of fan service, Namco have gone to considerable effort to including a whole bunch of Pac Man references. For instance, as you pass each checkpoint, your position in the race will produce a display of your lap time, your position, and if you are in the lead, you will also get a little animation of Pac Man being chased by some ghosts.

If you are not coming first, the animation is of Pac Man chasing the ghosts! But that's not all. Elsewhere in the game, you can unlock Pac Man as well as the ghosts to be the drivers of the cars.

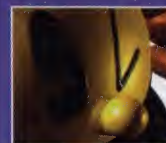
No official licensing? No problem! RRV is filled with fantasy dream cars!

FAN SERVICE

It should be mentioned that Namco have gone to some considerable effort to please the fans. Sunny Beach is the classic favourite track from the original *Ridge Racer*, and it's received the full PlayStation 2 treatment. The



PAC MAN MUSIC PLAYER



Ridge Racer V features a music player that cycles through its awesome collection of music - mostly electronica that flirts with hardcore techno - which features in-game demos as the video clip. The Music Player is actually presented much like a radio program, in which the game commentator plays the DJ, and his co-host is none other than Pac Man!



RACING IN THE FOG

Ridge Racer V offers a split screen 2-player mode. You and a friend can either compete head to head against each other, or you can both take part in a Gran Prix together.

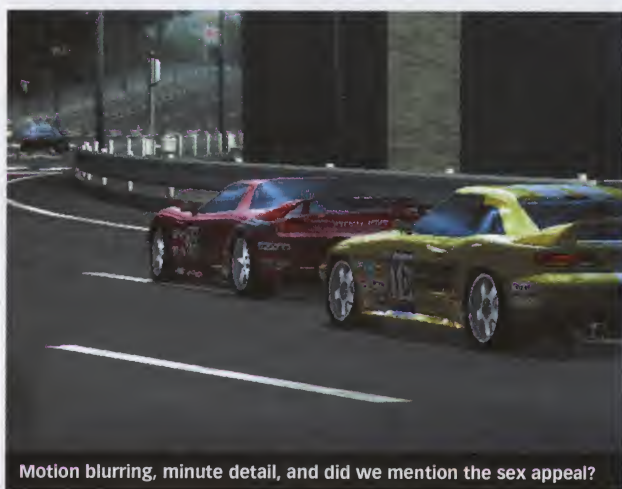
Winning the Gran Prix is actually the key to unlocking several of the game's secret cars, such as Pac Man and the Ghost Cars.

Sadly, *Ridge Racer V*'s 2-player mode leaves much to be desired. The game maintains its smooth pace and frame rate, but the cost of having to process a second car has been quite dear: the disappearing point is appalling.

Basically, there is enough fog to put any Nintendo 64 game to shame. With the disappearing point literally halved, it's nearly impossible to anticipate where the next turn is coming - making it even harder if you are just learning a new track.



Pop-up is still with us in RRV, but these handy overpasses conceal it



Motion blurring, minute detail, and did we mention the sex appeal?



Re-live that classic scene from Ferris Bueller's Day Off

WAS THIS A RUSHED JOB?

In spite of how glowing or hyped up any of us might be of *Ridge Racer V*, it is a game that is riddled with flaws. The primary fault is that the in-game graphics are filled with jagged edges, basically meaning the game takes no advantage of anti-aliasing effects that are used in the latest PC games and the odd Dreamcast game. Unfortunately, such is the presence of these jagged lines that *Ridge Racer V* doesn't look like the 'revolutionary new gaming experience' that many were waiting for. 'Evolutionary', perhaps, but by no means revolutionary.

Of course, that's not to say that *Ridge Racer V* looks like rubbish. In fact it looks fantastic. But compared to, say, the Dreamcast's *Sega GT*, it's only marginally better since *Sega GT* only runs at a very 32-bit 30fps while *Ridge Racer V* runs at a smooth 60fps. Without letting this discussion

degenerate into a system war, all it really goes to prove is that the PlayStation 2 is capable of pushing out high-end Dreamcast games, and the Dreamcast can push out low-end PlayStation 2 games. No surprises there, really.

The other main fault of *Ridge Racer V* is its overall structure. Sure, the tracks are excellent and the game is extremely challenging, but it's just plain wrong to have to finish the game with every single car in Easy, Normal, and Hard mode in order to unlock everything and 'complete' the game. Surely there could have been a more imaginative way to provide incentives for us to finish the game?

HOW DO YOU RATE A NEW PLAYING FIELD?

Such design oversights bespeak of a rush job, and that's pretty much what it all comes down to. Every developer, including Namco, were given only 8 months to produce games in time





Amber hues, delicious sunsets. Race tracks at any time of the day or night



Hmmm. Nice rear end...



Land a jump and watch the sparks fly!



Ridge City is a bit of a ghost town



Still, it makes for unhindered racing action!

for the launch of the PlayStation 2, and *Ridge Racer V* was no exception. The production cycle of a game is usually 2 years. So basically, that's 8 months to learn the mechanics and internal workings of a completely new machine sporting top-of-the-line hardware.

Namco and other developers have gone on record to say that they are only using one portion of the Emotion Engine - not even including the graphics synthesiser - meaning that *Ridge Racer V* doesn't even scratch the surface as far

as what the PlayStation 2 is capable of. While this serves as something of an explanation, it is by no means an excuse.

And at the same time, just because it is not the 'best' doesn't mean it isn't any good. *Ridge Racer V* is a fantastic game that holds its own, but it's not going to win any awards for game design or visuals. With that in mind, there is a fair degree of difficulty in determining how to score the game fairly.

There are many critics out there who want to just buy into the hype and give anything looking next gen a really high score, but that just wouldn't work. If we gave every new PlayStation 2 launch title a score of 90+, is that to suggest that everything that comes out afterwards will only be at most 10% better? Obviously not.

That's why we are lifting the stakes, in line with the machine's capabilities. So before you start writing angrily to us about how PlayStation 2 scores are lower than PSX scores, understand that we are rating how enjoyable the game is relative to what the PlayStation 2 hardware can actually do.

With that massive qualification out of the way, the bottom line on *Ridge Racer V* is as follows: the game looks fantastic, but could easily have looked better if Namco were allowed more time to develop the game.

The racing mechanics are pretty much flawless, meaning that all *Ridge Racer* fans will be immensely pleased with the driving action. It's a tad unfortunate the game wasn't structured very well. Nevertheless, it provides a very tasty glimpse of what the machine may be able to do in future.

Kevin Cheung

THE LOVE FACTOR



Curiously, the new *Ridge Racer* girl, Ai Fukami, appears for only a few very brief moments - thus raising automatically two questions. Firstly, was it absolutely necessary to replace Reiko Nagase? And secondly, given that she is easily one of the most impressive in-game character models we have ever seen, why wasn't she given any more air time?



STATION

OVERALL: Could have been better. Could have been a lot better. But it's a still fantastic racer, the best on PS2

| | | |
|-------------|-------|--|
| GRAPHICS: | ★★★★ | The cars, tracks and AI look awesome. Pity about the fogging |
| SOUND: | ★★★★★ | Namco are going hardcore with this soundtrack. It roooooocks! |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★★★ | Not much done here. It's <i>Ridge Racer</i> , tried and true |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★★★ | The RR physics model is not intuitive, and takes a bit of learning |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★★★ | A zillion things to unlock, plus timeless pick-up-and-play appeal |

THESE REVIEWS ARE BASED ON THE CURRENT JAPANESE RELEASE. THINGS ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE FOR THE LOCAL RELEASE, IN WHICH CASE THESE GAMES WILL BE COVERED AGAIN!

92
PERCENT

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

All your favourites hit the gym and are now looking buffer than ever!

PS2 FACTS

- Publisher
Namco
- Developer
Namco
- Genre
Racing
- Release Date
On Import
- Players
One or two
- No. of CD's
TBA
- Features
Dual Shock 2
Meg Memory Card
- PS1 Compatible
Dual Shock
NegCon
JogCon



Behold, these are actual in-game graphics from Tekken Tag. Note the pecs, abs, and panache



"Hey Jin, your mum's dead! How come she's in the game?"



"Let me tell you - "



" - About my mother!"

History definitely has a habit of repeating itself. The launch of the original Playstation was helped along tremendously by Namco's groundbreaking Ridge Racer and Tekken games. After five long years of waiting, the PlayStation 2 has finally arrived, and again it is Namco's two big titles that are providing gamers with the most persuasive reason to upgrade to the new system.

Precious little may have changed on the gameplay front but the leap from one generation to the next provides us with in-game characters that look even better than those seen in the original game's pre-rendered intro. Normally I would talk about the gameplay first because it is always the most important aspect of any game. However, like Namco, I'll concern myself primarily with the game's graphics and take a look at the gameplay later.

Okay, maybe that was a little negative. Let me change the pace a bit by saying "Wow, wow, wow and freakin' wow!" You may have heard a few of the negative rumours floating around the net that have gone so far as to describe *Tekken Tag* as nothing more than an 'slightly enhanced' Tekken 3.

Allow me to assure you that not only does this game exceed the quality of graphics seen in Dreamcast games like *Soul Calibur* and *Dead*



Every strand of hair, every lash, every comely smile, the girls of Tekken are sexier than ever!



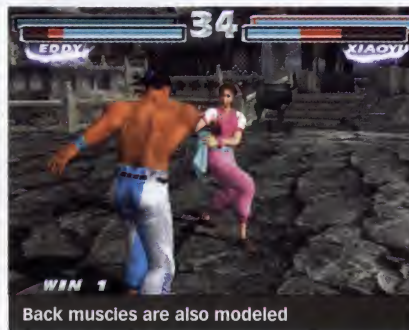
Eddy is still the roort merchant he always was



Whoah!



Change my pitch up...



Back muscles are also modeled



That's gotta hurt!

or Alive 2, but it is arguably the owner of the most impressive visuals ever. I say 'arguably' because while it is clearly pushing more polygons than any game before it, the game does have a number of graphical blemishes that may spoil the experience for many people.

The area that *Tekken Tag* excels most in is the construction of the characters themselves. It's a shame that you can only look at the screenshots of the game in this review because to truly appreciate them, the characters need to be moving. Many of us had seen the static shots of the game and thought that the characters looked impressive enough.

However, when you see one of the fighters moving about on screen your jaw will hit the floor as you realise that every single muscle on their body has been defined by thousands of polygons. The result is a group of insanely smooth characters who laugh at the thought of their straight-edged predecessors.

THE FACELIFT

The backgrounds have received a similarly astronomical facelift. The blurry 2D backgrounds and the sketchy, low polygon, 3D foregrounds we were accustomed to in the PlayStation 1 games have been thrown in the trash. Now the fights all take place in surprisingly complex 3D environments, crawling with fully 3D characters that are casually wandering around or cheering the fights on.



You may find yourself brawling in the streets of Hong Kong, surrounded by towering skyscrapers as you splash your way through puddles on the road that accurately reflect the neon lights of the nearby shops; or you may fight your way around a school yard, gazing at detailed buildings and huge crowds of animated school children who split their attention between the fight and their pet panda.

CHARACTER GRIPES

I still have major gripes with the characters. I want the person in charge of designing P. Jack to be taken outside and beaten with a rubber pipe until he apologises for the atrocity. What the hell was he thinking? If I make a goofy character with arms longer than his legs, will that look cool? While P. Jack may be the worst character in the game, there are still a large number of them that simply should have been modified years ago. What is the point of all these sexy new graphics if they are going to waste them on such ugly looking characters and costumes?

My second gripe with the characters is the animation. Due to the fact that the game still uses a lot of animation routines from the first Tekken game, the moves look surprisingly disjointed and unrealistic compared to the grace some of the more recent 3D fighters like *Dead Or Alive 2* or *Soul Calibur*. I hope Namco does some serious tweaking of the character designs and

TEKKEN HAS BALLS

One of the great things about videogames is that everyone keeps an eye on their competitor's games.

This means that whenever you see a useful option appear in a game, you can bet that it will begin to surface in all the similar games in the genre. Some of you may not believe this, but in the old days when we finished a game the only reward we received would be "Game Over. Congratulations."

Not only does Tekken Tag Tournament feature 14 bonus characters on top of the 20 standard fighters, a different ending for each character and a wealth of fighting modes, but there is even a bowling game included.

You can select any of the Tekken characters (who play in teams of two, in keeping with the tag element of the game) and compete in one or two player bowling tournaments.

What is more surprising is that this bowling mode is very polished and surprisingly addictive. Even though I had only owned the game for a day and had only unlocked half of the characters, I found myself playing the bowling game for a couple of hours, constantly trying to improve on my score.

SECOND OPINION



KEVIN CHEUNG

The only thing I disagree with Narayan about is the tag system. In my opinion, it's too simplistic, nay, almost retarded.

My reasons are two-fold: firstly, it doesn't take advantage of any co-operative moves worth mentioning; and secondly, even though the energy management is cool, the round should be over only when both characters are knocked out.

Aside from that, the only quibble that I had with the game was that it plays almost identically to the older Tekken games. At least in Ridge Racer V, there was a marked improvement in the control & mechanics of the game thanks to the increased levels of analogue.



You have to see this in action to believe it. All that grass waves back and forth in the wind!



animation routines for the upcoming Tekken 4 because it's all getting a bit old. I have one problem with the backgrounds, and it's quite an annoying one. Unfortunately, Namco have decided to continue the tradition of having a single flat plan for the floor of the fighting ring that is completely independent of the background. While this does avoid the complications involved with you being able to bump into sections of the background, it does raise a few new problems.

The first major annoyance is that the 3D effect of the backgrounds is compromised by the fact that the floor rotates out of synch with the backgrounds. It spoils the whole effect and makes it hard to determine what is 2D and what is 3D. The second problem is while the disjointed floor prevents complications that would arise if you could reach the backgrounds, the problem is that it's such a waste, there's no possibility for interaction. Just imagine how cool it would be if you could get knocked into the cheering crowds.

All manner of cool possibilities would open up. Imagine being able to have crowd members hand you weapons or have them roughly fling you back into the fight if you did bump into them. Hopefully we will see these sorts of features soon.

WHAT ABOUT THE GAMEPLAY?

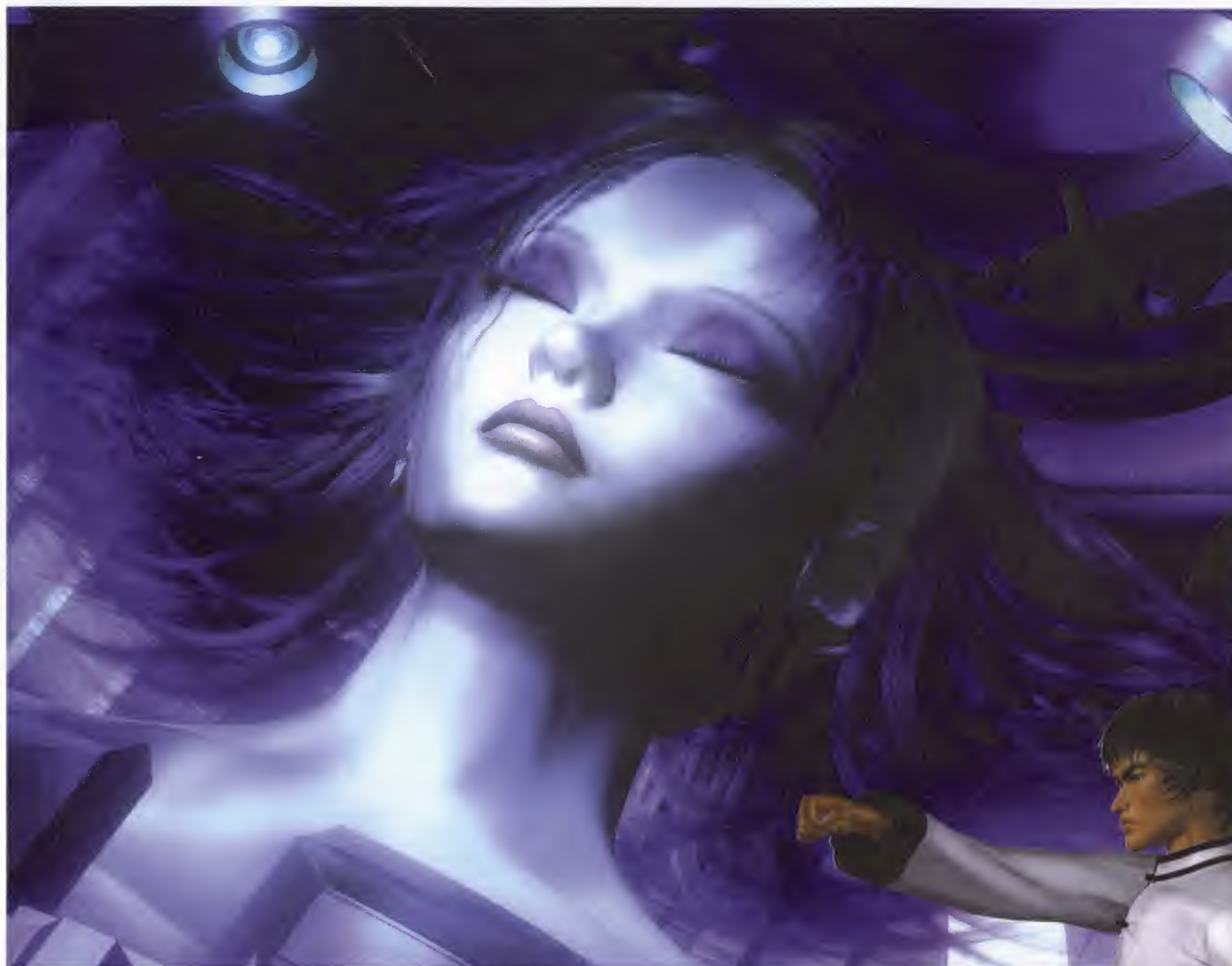
Namco should have taken a serious look at this question. Apart from a few very minor refinements, this game is nothing more than all



the characters from Tekken 2 and 3 returning with a new tag feature. It is nice to see 33 of the previous Tekken characters being reunited with incredible new graphics.

However, the addition of a single new boss character seems a bit weak. Especially since her moves consist of a mixture of moves from the established female characters, and the cool disembodied wolf character that floats behind her is unable to be used in any attacking moves.

Although the tag feature is a simple one, it does enhance the fighting action quite nicely. Unlike the majority of other tag-based fighting games, the round is lost the moment your first character dies. So, if you have been silly enough to leave your second character in the wings with 100% health, when your first character dies, you're going to be kicking yourself pretty hard.



Tekken Tag throws continuity to the wind. Despite a 20 year gap in the timeline, every Tekken character can meet and fight!

JUGGLING BETWEEN FIGHTERS

It is even more essential to juggle between your two fighters during a match because the character not fighting has their energy bar slowly refilled. Some people have complained about it being unfair that an entire round is lost the moment one character dies, but I think this necessitates an added level of strategy that is not evident in the other tag-based fighters.

Unfortunately, the core gameplay of *Tekken Tag* has changed very little since its prequel. Most of the characters have got a couple of new moves and combos. However, none of the attacks are radically different and you will hardly notice most of them because they usually only involve a minor tweaking of a previous move.

SPINNING ATTACKS REMEDIED

Thankfully, they have remedied the problem of spinning attacks magically passing through a blocking opponent's limbs. Now if you do a move like Kazuya's quadruple spinning kick and your opponent blocks, Kazuya's leg will be pushed to the side and all his momentum will be lost.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR

There are a handful of uninspired techno tunes to accompany the action and the same punching and kicking sound effects have returned, unaltered since the last game. C'mon guys, at least take the time to record some new taunts or something. Let's hear it from Namco.

Most people will be happy with *Tekken Tag* Tournament because it delivers all the gameplay we are used to and wraps it up in some very sexy new graphics. New gamers who experience *Tekken Tag* as their first taste of fighting action will no doubt also be more than happy with the staggering array of characters and their bone-crunching moves.

It must be said though, that the more serious gamers will perhaps feel a little disappointed with the game. I realise that Namco only had about six months to convert the game, and so did not have the time to make any radical improvements.

However, I think they should have ignored Sony's demands to get the game ready early and taken the time to design a *Tekken* game for the PlayStation 2 that would have really blown our minds. There are plenty of examples

in this game that prove that the PlayStation 2 is an amazing piece of hardware and I think gamers deserve something a bit more exciting to go with the eye candy than the gameplay that was offered on the PlayStation 1.

Daniel McGillick

TTT VERSUS SOUL CALIBUR



The characters from *Soul Calibur* on the Dreamcast may look great but looking at them again after playing *Tekken Tag*, they look blocky.

Where the characters in *Soul Calibur* will use a detailed texture for muscles like their abdominals, the *Tekken* characters will have smoothly rounded, individual muscles. It's a similar story for the backgrounds; the legions of animated polygon characters in *Tekken*'s backgrounds make for great eye candy but because of some weaknesses, like the disjointed floor, they do not look as stylish as those in *Soul Calibur*. The staggering number of polygons that are displayed in *Tekken*'s characters and backgrounds will make many people swoon but the game does kind of lack a lot of the graceful beauty of its sword-swinging sister.

THESE REVIEWS ARE BASED ON THE CURRENT JAPANESE RELEASE. THINGS ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE FOR THE LOCAL RELEASE, IN WHICH CASE THESE GAMES WILL BE COVERED AGAIN!

STATION

OVERALL: It may be the same old game but it's a good one and it sure looks amazing.

| | | |
|-------------|-------|---|
| GRAPHICS: | ★★★★★ | Drool over characters that are better defined than you'll ever be |
| SOUND: | ★★★ | There are some bassy new tunes but all the old effects return |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★★★★ | No <i>Tekken</i> fan could be unhappy with all these characters |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★ | You can still unlock everything on the easiest level |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★★ | Mastering all 34 characters will keep you busy |

89
PERCENT

PlayStation Top Ten

It's no surprise that the sequel to the biggest action adventure game last year is rifled to the number one spot, nor is it surprising that the brilliant Tony Hawk is still hovering around the Top Ten!

01 Syphon Filter 2



02 Jedi Power Battles



03 Crash Team Racing



04 Gran Turismo 2



05 Rollcage Stage 2



06 Resident Evil 3: Nemesis



07 Tekken 3 Platinum



08 Tony Hawk



09 Final Fantasy VIII



10 Gran Turismo Platinum



What's the crew playing?

Kevin Cheung



KEVIN'S TOP FIVE

1. Dead Or Alive 2 (PS2)
2. MediEvil 2
3. Ridge Racer V (PS2)
4. Syphon Filter 2
5. Castlevania: SOTN

Dead or Alive 2



There has been precious little that's been able to take my attention away from the PlayStation 2. Dead Or Alive 2 and Ridge Racer V, easily amongst the best in their genres, have got me absolutely hooked. MediEvil 2 is in there because there aren't any platformers on the PS2 yet, and I am just a sucker for anything remotely resembling Danny Elfman or Tim Burton. Castlevania? One of the best games ever made. Picked it up and started it all over again. Awesome.



James Cottey



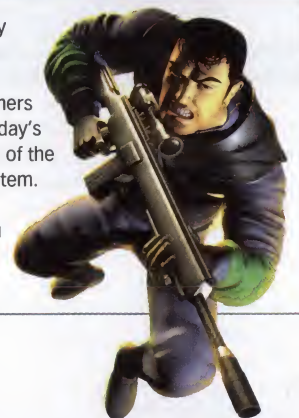
JAMES' TOP FIVE

1. Colony Wars Red Sun
2. Syphon Filter 2
3. Worms Armageddon
4. Rollcage Stage 2
5. Wip3out

Syphon Filter 2



Eventually one grows tired of watching the pretty graphics of the PS2 over Kev's shoulder, and you have to come down to Earth by playing ordinary PSX games. Of course, after 5 years of programmers sculpting their talent the product available for today's PlayStation is hardly ordinary. Take Red Sun, one of the best space combat games ever made on any system. Ever. Not to mention Syphon Filter 2, or the eminently stylish new Rollcage game. No sir, you don't have to have the latest stuff from Japan to be spoilt. Spoilt for choice, that is.



Keith Talent



KEITH'S TOP FIVE

1. Jedi Power Battles
2. Micro Maniacs
3. This Is Soccer
4. Marvel Vs Capcom
5. Syphon Filter 2

Micro Maniacs

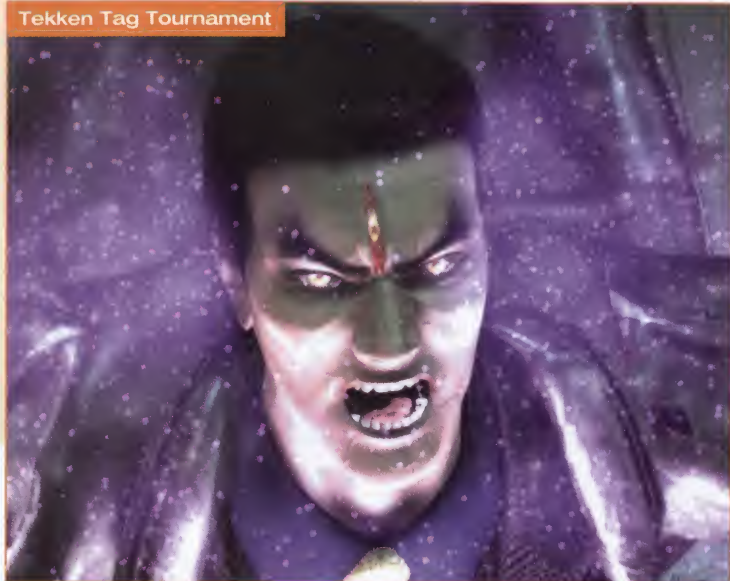


I've been writing reviews for the good folk at Station for some time now, so I feel it's rather fitting that I be made the first candidate ever for this new rotating post in the top five section. Of course, even my great talents were stretched by the question "What have you been playing?" What a question, dear readers! What haven't I been playing? There are so many good games coming out these days that before I'm done battling with my light sabre I'm obliged to square Ryu off against Spiderman. Curse you, fate, for your terrible, terrible generosity...



PLAYTEST CONTENTS

Tekken Tag Tournament



Every game featured in our PlayTest section has been reviewed independently and objectively by our team of writers. We aim to give an informed and comprehensive idea of what the game is about, and most importantly, whether the game is good or bad. Each game reviewed receives an overall score out of 100 which should be seen in context of the type of game it is and in relation to similar titles it is competing with.

THESE FACTORS ARE AWARDED UP TO FIVE STARS:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| GRAPHICS | Does the game look good and has it taken advantage of the available technology? |
| SOUND | The PlayStation offers developers the potential to create mind blowing audio. Have they? |
| GAMEPLAY | This is what it boils down to. Is the game enjoyable and fun to play, or will you hurl the joy pad at the TV?! |
| DIFFICULTY | Is the game difficult? Does it take a great deal of skill to play? The higher the mark here, the more difficult the game is. |
| LIFESPAN | How long can you expect this game to hold your interest? Will you play again after you have beaten it? |
| PLAYERS | Some games allow two or more players to take part, either alternately or simultaneously, and some can even be linked to a second PlayStation for head-to-head two-player action. |
| GAME FEATURES | Many games take advantage of after-market devices such as analogue controllers, steering wheels, Sony's PlayStation Mouse, various light guns, the Multi-tap four-player adaptor, memory cards, various peripherals and accessories. |
| ALTERNATIVES | A selection of games that are similar in concept or appeal to the one reviewed. |

WHAT OUR RATINGS MEAN:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 91 - 100% | AN INSTANT CLASSIC, YOU MUST PLAY THIS GAME! |
| 81 - 90 | EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD, WITH FLAWS YOU'D BARELY NOTICE |
| 71 - 80 | A GOOD EFFORT WITH A FEW NIGGLING FLAWS |
| 61 - 70 | A VERY AVERAGE GAME WITH A FEW PROBLEMS |
| 51 - 60 | HAS SOME NICE IDEAS, BUT COULD HAVE BEEN MUCH BETTER |
| 41 - 50 | A GAME WITH A GREAT DEAL MORE FLAWS THAN MERITS |
| 31 - 40 | PAINFUL TO PLAY, AND A WASTE OF MONEY |
| 21 - 30 | GETTING A SHOT FOR TETANUS IS MORE FUN THAN THIS |
| 11 - 20 | UTTER SHITE. GO OUT AND GET SOME SUN INSTEAD |
| 01 - 10 | IMPRESS YOUR FRIENDS WITH A COOL BLACK DRINK COASTER! |

60 JEDI POWER BATTLES

The return of the beat 'em up! It's like Double Dragon with light sabres, and one of the best Star Wars games yet. Grab your laser sword and take on Darth Maul!

62 SYPHON FILTER 2

989 Studios have given their tactical combat game an overhaul, with more action, a two player mode and action movie cliches for good measure.

64 ALUNDRA 2

Alundra was an old-school 2D RPG which succeeded in spite of itself in a market full of 3D role playing games. Its creators have decided to make the move to 3D for its sequel.

66 ROLLAGE STAGE 2

Rollage was an innovative racing game that had you driving on the walls and ceilings, but it was bloody impossible to play. The sequel is easier, and prettier, but is it groovier?

68 RESIDENT EVIL SURVIVOR

A new take on the zombie infested exodus from Raccoon City: Turn it into a first person shooter. Double the thrills, double the chills. But double the fun? Find out inside.

70 COLONY WARS RED SUN

Space combat games have been pretty sparse on the PlayStation, aside from the usual shoot-em-ups. This is more like X-Wing. Red Sun is the third and best Colony Wars game yet.

72 MARVEL VS CAPCOM

It's 2D comic book characters versus 2D fighting game characters, and the result doesn't fall flat at all. If you can't wait for the X-Men movie, then give this a workout.

73 WWF SMACKDOWN

Another wrestling game! AAAAAARRRRGGGH! Aren't there enough of them yet? While Smackdown could be the best one yet, this is only by way of diminishing returns.

73 MUPPET RACEMANIA

It's time to play the music! It's time to light the lights! It's time to get things started on The Muppet Show Tonight!

74 RUGRATS STUDIO TOUR

The Rugrats return, and they still seem to be babies after all these years. What's with that? This is another collection of mini games and puzzles and so forth.

76 STREET FIGHTER EX 2 PLUS

When is a 3D fighting game not a 3D fighting game? When it's a stale re-hash of the most exploited 2D fighting game in the universe. Check the Use By date before purchase, kids.

77 MICRO MANIACS

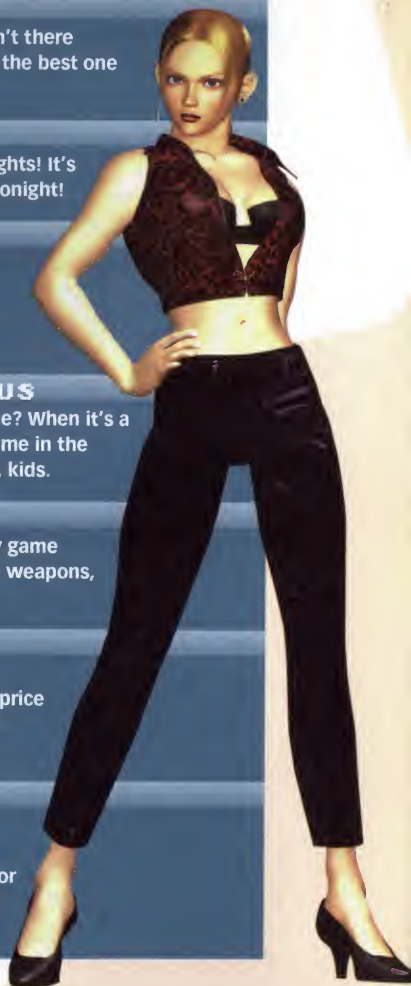
The Micro Machines games were innovative party game fare, and this new version adds personality, more weapons, and no need for licensing fees!

78 MGS PLATINUM

This is possibly the best game made yet for the PlayStation, and it's now available at the bargain price of \$49.95! Tactics, espionage, sex, violence, and a giant robot! Woo hoo!

78 RRT4 PLATINUM

One of the absolute best arcade style racing games out for the PlayStation, RRT4 is about as stylish as a game can get. If you just can't wait for RR5 on PS2, then alleviate your acronym deficiencies with this.



STAR WARS: JEDI POWER BATTLES

After the dust has settled, can LucasArts finally do the fans proud?

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Playcorp
- Developer
LucasArts
- Genre
3D Platform
- Release Date
Soonish
- Players
One or two
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
Chopping robots into bitty bits fun.

ALTERNATIVES

- Legend



The "You're surrounded" trick didn't work

After the release of the lackluster *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, disappointment may have been what you would expect on the release of yet another game under the Episode I licence. Definitely not so. While looking much like the *Phantom Menace* game, *Jedi Power Battles* is much more exciting and fun to play.

Jedi Power Battles is set during the time in which *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace* takes place and it goes some way to following the movie plot. Thankfully, in the interest of decent gameplay, LucasArts had the soundness of mind not to adhere closely to the storyline



Even Jedi can't resist laughing when being tickled

giving them the freedom to design some truly entertaining levels as well as some devilishly difficult bosses.

The heart of the game is set up as a platformer. You have control of one of five Jedi Knights from Qui-gon Jinn to Obi-wan Kenobi to Mace Windu and couple of other not so well known Jedi namely Plo Koon and Adi Gallia. Starting with only 5 credits, you take your Jedi Knight through the levels and obstacles while defeating a relentless horde of

enemies and scoring points. At the end of each level, you face the big boss and come out tops. Sure it does not sound much, but hey, it's a platformer.

To make things more interesting, they've packed in a variety of enemies that need to be shown who's boss. And while a Jedi you may be, they'll wear you down. Luckily, throughout each of the levels there are health and force icons that are strategically placed to allow you to replenish yourself, at the same time you can

pickup other items from thermal detonators to shield packs and even extra credits.

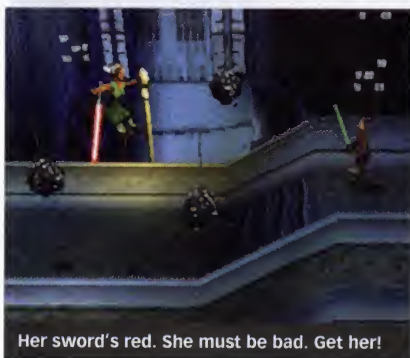
The credit system may seem limiting at first, especially since you only get one life per credit, but after completing a level you're given the opportunity to save your game. After you doing so and the next time you run out of credits you can start again on the next or any other completed level with a full 5 credits.

At first looks, *Jedi Power Battles* looks very much like *The Phantom Menace*. They





Use your Jedi mind tricks to cause the hovercraft to brake - sending your assailants over the edge



Her sword's red. She must be bad. Get her!



No one makes it on their first jump...

both have a third-person view of your Jedi and the battlefield. The models are essentially the same as before and the levels are similarly constructed as to make the two games look almost identical.

However, *Jedi Power Battles* has much, much more. And while it may not show in the quality of the visuals it certainly stands out in the gameplay department.

A FUTURISTIC GOLDEN AXE! AWESOME!

The controls have been much improved over TPM allowing for much more freedom of movement and your character gains many more moves. Responsiveness is still a little off the mark and while you may find it easy slicing through enemies, navigating around obstacles in levels leaves something to be desired. The third person view contributes partly to the difficulty in judging depth and with dodgy controls in air, you will often find yourself leaping to sweet death.

The combat is the more enjoyable aspect of this game and considerable effort has been put in to make it pretty special. There are three

basic attacks. An over head cut, sideways swipes and special attack. Holding the Force button modifies two of these into a special Force attack and item usage.

The block button allows you to defend against any attack including deflecting laser blasts. In fact, this can be use offensively as well. Pressing block at the right time has the effect that 90% of the time the laser blast will be deflected directly back at the attacker and you can have that smug feeling of having just downed him with his own shot.

PRECISION SLICING AND DICING

With the lock feature, you lock on to one target keeping you facing your foe and allowing you to sidestep and roll out of the way of his attacks while directing all your force against him. Attacks aren't limited to standard saber swipes either. As you progress through the



"No, the tennis ball's not up here!"

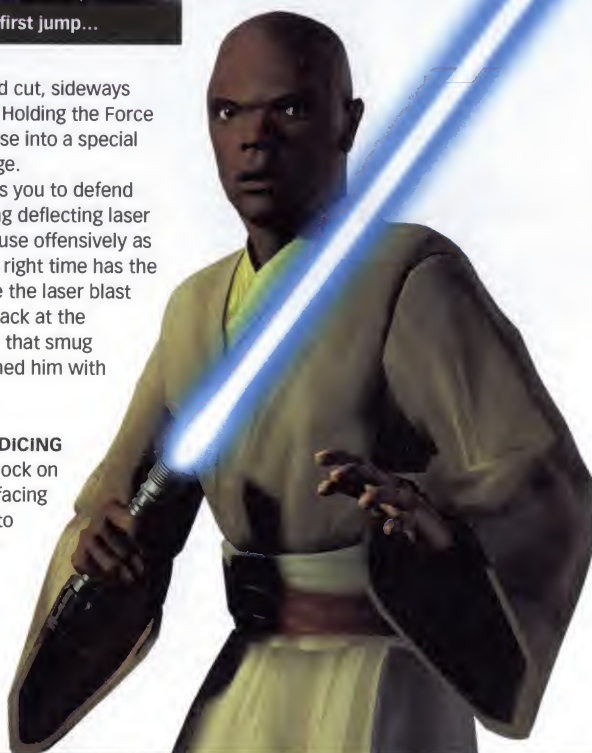
game you're awarded special attack combos to add to your array of lethal moves.

The rest of the game is pretty slick. The musical score is faultless, thanks to LucasArts using Episode I's original soundtrack composed by the great John Williams. Similarly, all the sound effects are excellent as they come straight from the Lucasfilm archives.

Jedi Power Battles is a great little number, affording challenging and relentless platforming gameplay while submerging us deep into the Star Wars universe. The kids will eat up the lovely visuals and what gamer would pass up the chance to play a Jedi Knight?

Though ten levels may not sound like much they are guaranteed to be demanding enough that you won't defeat them in a day. And the two-player mode is pure ecstasy. There is no better way to strengthen a friendship than you and a mate psychotically hacking your way through tons of enemies. *Jedi Power Battles*, great stuff.

Aaron Lai



GAME FEATURES

Memory Card

Dual Shock Compatible

SECOND OPINION



KEVIN CHEUNG

To be perfectly honest, *Jedi Power Battles* doesn't have much going for it in strict gameplay terms. The last time a game like this was released (Legend), it was rightly panned and quickly forgotten. *Jedi Power Battles* has certainly copped a lot of flack from our American brethren, mostly due to bitterness towards LucasArts themselves, but at the core of this game - which is what really got me into this game - is novelty. This is one of those rare occasions where novelty plays a massive part in whether or not you like the game. If you're a Star Wars fan who is familiar with all four currently available episodes, then you're going to love it. If you are not, then you mightn't understand what all the fuss is about.

STATION

OVERALL: Are you strong enough with the Force to take on the challenge?

| | | |
|-------------|------|---|
| GRAPHICS: | ★★★★ | Great looking levels. Love that glow on the sabre |
| SOUND: | ★★★★ | Faultless. Everything is strikingly faithful to the movie |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★★★ | Thrilling action even though control can be dodgy |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★★★ | No overnight finishes for this game |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★★ | Two player mode is worth it |

86
PERCENT

SYPHON FILTER 2

Gabe Logan fears no virus. He kills them...

FACT FILE

- **Publisher**
Sony
- **Developer**
989 Studios
- **Genre**
3rd Person Shooter
- **Release Date**
Out now
- **Players**
One or two
- **No. of CD's**
Two
- **Expectations**
Is Gabriel Logan's latest adventure any different from the first one?

ALTERNATIVES

- Die Hard 2
- Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes



Play chicken with oncoming traffic



"That 'behind you' trick won't work on me"



The original game has been refined and improved upon. One ingredient shown here: cool weapons



The first Syphon Filter was a runaway success for 989 Studios last year, thriving in a market that was more than ready for its uniquely balanced yet simple mix of action and puzzle solving. While it lacked the depth of Metal Gear Solid, the perspective employed gave the game instant appeal, and with some clever marketing an instant fan base.

Syphon Filter had the upper hand on frustrating puzzle games like Tomb Raider in that it offered the magic quality for any games success: instant gratification. Most people don't find the idea of scouring a level for around two hours just to find a bloody key intriguing, they want a game where they can sit back and blast some terrorists.

Unfortunately this atmosphere was far from consistent. The level where you had to find the invisible gas mains switch in the dark and the night-on-impossible to kill helicopter gunships were but a couple of prime examples of this.

The challenge of Syphon Filter 2 was to iron out these quibbles while providing a sufficient overall improvement to the gameplay to satisfy veteran fans and newcomers alike, and it could be argued that these criteria were met.

There are new levels, new options, new weapons and there are also double the number of playable characters. There are still one or two quibbles, but they hardly overshadow the atmosphere of high tech action that saturates this new release.

LOGAN. GABE LOGAN.

For those unfamiliar with the plot, you control Gabriel Logan, a top flight operative for "The Agency" (presumably the CIA). The first game chronicled his exploits against a sinister terrorist outfit bent on destroying the world with the deadliest bacteriological weapon ever devised, the genetically engineered "Syphon Filter" virus.

With some help over the radio from Lian Xing, he followed a number of surprisingly linear paths that roughly resembled strife-torn urban environments, sniping terrorists with pinpoint accuracy.

This is the formula followed for the sequel, with a third person perspective from behind Gabe. When using his sniping skills you zoom in on his weapon and the target, and his body becomes translucent so you can better see your targets. Through the judicious use of "aiming" your firearm instead of just running around firing blindly, it is possible to take out pretty much any enemy with a single shot to the head.

The changes made for Syphon Filter 2 largely concern the plot. Because Gabe and Lian now "know too much" they've become hunted by The Agency themselves. There are also a handful of new weapons, like the taser and the crossbow, but the action/violence combination at the core of Syphon Filter remains unchanged.

It's comparable to Duke Nukem: Planet of The Babes, except that the control is better, the graphics are better, the cut scenes are better, the plot is more cinematic (better), the main character is more plausible and the overall package is much, much classier.



Like many other sequels, Syphon Filter 2 lets its supporting characters play a much larger role



From that distance, she's a bloody good shot



Hmm... Lian's disguise could use a little work

Gabe is the superspy incarnate. He can lock on to any enemy at any angle while running, commando rolling or sneaking. By making him a nimble fox the arcade like nature of the gameplay is believable, as he can charge through a crowd of bumbling hoods. Controlling Lian Xing on 8 of the game's 24 levels swaps the fox for a vixen, a bit of affirmative action from 989 that doesn't go astray.

It should be noted though that *Syphon Filter 2* is not perfect. Some people may take issue with the cut scenes, which use character models that closely resemble the way the characters are represented in game. That is, they are like life-size, blocky rag dolls that have

next to no facial features and something of a cartoonish quality to them. A public accustomed to Tekken 3 quality FMVs may find this concept a little jarring at first.

There's still the odd bit of running around in the dark wondering what you're supposed to do for most of the level. The first mission in the game has you staggering around on a mountain top in total darkness with only a vague notion of your objective and how to achieve it. Success involves backtracking, telling the nearly identical rocks around you apart, and staving off the constantly respawning legions of evil Agency agents.

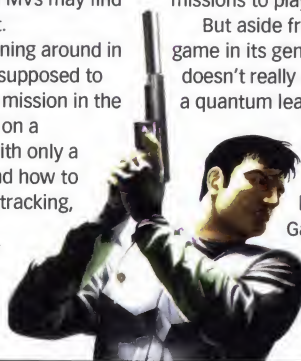
The addition of a two player mode is a nice touch. While it's not particularly deep, it adds a genuine multiplayer experience as an alternative your friends crowding around yelling at you their views on your tactical situation. The maps are varied, yet small, which is appropriate since you don't want to waste any time finding one another, you just want to blast away.

WORTH YOUR MONEY?

These are only minor points, however. If any real criticism can be leveled at *Syphon Filter 2*, it's a lack of originality. Die hard enthusiasts of the original will jump at this, so they can have another set of well designed and captivating missions to play at over and over again.

But aside from being the absolute best game in its genre to date, *Syphon Filter 2* doesn't really offer anything new. If you want a quantum leap in game quality, you'll have to wait for the inevitable sequel on the PlayStation2. But if you want the latest blistering adventures of Gabriel Logan in a slick and affordable package, then this is surely your best bet.

James Cottee



GAME FEATURES

Memory Card

Dual Shock Compatible

SECOND OPINION



KEVIN CHEUNG

In spite of the lack of originality, I must say that it's good to see *Syphon Filter 2* come out so well, particularly in light of the fact that games like *Tomorrow Never Dies* were so questionable.

While the game offers precious little improvement in graphics or control for the single-player game, it's the split-screen two player mode that I have grown fond of. It's not a bad diversion, if only to frustrate your N64-owning friends who are still waiting on *Winback*.

STATION

OVERALL: A worthy sequel that'll keep the fans happy, but don't expect any new tricks of your old best friend.

| | | |
|-------------|------|---|
| GRAPHICS: | ★★★★ | Functional, convincing real world environments, nice motion capture |
| SOUND: | ★★★ | Nothing amazing, but all the voice actin is above par |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★★★★ | Well balanced mix of sneaking, sniping and shooting |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★★★ | Bloody hard. Each level will stop you in your tracks |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★★ | It's more of the same. You either like it or you don't |

88
PERCENT

ALUNDRA 2

A traditional RPG jumps on the 3D bandwagon

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Activision
- Developer
Contrail/Matrix
- Genre
Action RPG
- Release Date
May
- Players
One
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
Any RPG that isn't Final Fantasy is a nice change.

ALTERNATIVES

- Wild Arms
- Final Fantasy VIII



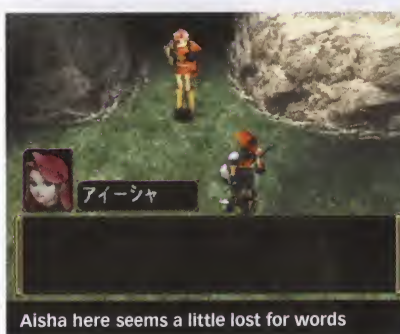
Sail away, sail away, sail away... 2D and 3D collide here, and the role of the RPG is further redefined

Quite often in these pages videogame sequels are panned for not being much more than a slight rehash of the original - same gameplay elements, revamped graphics and a novelty trick or two repackaged to make some quick cash without much outlay.

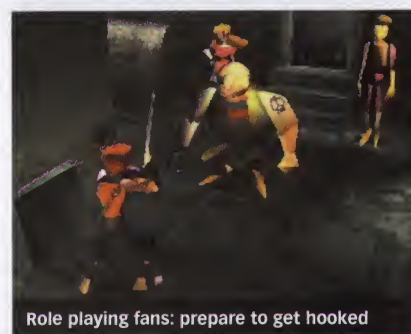
At the opposite end of the spectrum are games like *Alundra 2*. Except for the fact that it's also developed by Contrail and Matrix, *Alundra 2* shares almost nothing with the original game and this isn't really a bad thing.

Gone is the 2D retro Zelda styling and in its place is a fully 3D world that works better with the almost platform action elements of the game. Even *Alundra*, the eponymous hero of the first game, is gone and in his place we have Flint, a hero in the mould of Batman (dead parents, seeking vengeance etc). Also along for the ride is Aisha the Princess of Vanilla (mmmm, vanilla) who's out looking for her dad, the King.

We also have the obligatory evil dude in the shape of Mephisto, a bad-ass sorcerer type who wants to use his Magical Screws to turn the entire world into mindless robotic servants.



Aisha here seems a little lost for words



Role playing fans: prepare to get hooked

NOT THE GENETIC ENGINEER

Mephisto has some lackeys who constantly cross our heroes' path - the bumbling pirate Tetsuo and his family, who provide much of the comic relief in the storyline. These characters are woven into quite an entertaining tale that drives the game and gives it very much the feel of a light-hearted, G-rated action anime.

The overall design of the game goes down the medieval/futuristic combination, with the enemies and bosses being robotic hybrids mutated by Mephisto's magic screws. Flint takes on Mephisto's robot/animal servants with his trusty sword, which can be upgraded during the course of the game.

To start with Flint is only capable of a simple run, jump and slash, but through the

course of the game new moves can be learnt by visiting a puzzle-mad Buddha character. If you collect puzzle pieces and deliver them to him, he teaches Flint new moves. Special abilities can also be learnt by talking to the puzzle guy's guard, who will reward you if you visit various toilets around the game world and then return to describe them to him. Mmm... it just gets weirder and weirder.

There is also a simple magic system at Flint's disposal. By collecting various elemental stones he can use spells to attack enemies, trigger traps and breathe underwater among other things.

As far as RPG elements go, *Alundra 2* keeps things rather simple. You are only ever controlling Flint, although Aisha is often



Puzzles abound. Frustration follows



Vast environments seem even vaster when explored on foot



Bats. They're great survivors



Even on vacation, this guy just can't relax

assisting you (or getting kidnapped). There are only ever two stats to keep track of - Hit Points and Elemental Points, and Flint only ever has a sword and shield (upgraded in item shops as the game progresses).

Of course there are the usual RPG features like collecting money and items, buying things from shops and running little miniquests for different characters, but most of the fighting and puzzle solving aspects play like a good platform game.

DID SOMEBODY SAY "MINI GAMES"?

Adding to the platform feel are the ten minigames that can be found throughout the adventure. There is a special den where Flint can try his hand at darts (collected from random enemies) and earn points to score rare items, and in a similar vein in the village of Gyu York it's possible to place bets in the bull fighting ring where the fighting is actually between two bulls.

Aside from the gambling games there are more traditional minigames like the mine cart

level and the "running down a slope away from a rolling enemy" game. These minigames are quite entertaining diversions from the usual gameplay, and add considerably to the game's appeal.

The graphics also add to the charm, and the cut-scenes in particular - using the ingame graphic engine - are quite cinematic. One problem at the start of the game, though, is that these cut scenes account for about 10 minutes out of 12 minutes' total game time. Once the action does start, however, the game does benefit from having a storyline with a solid background.

In standard gameplay mode the camera can be rotated around Flint to get a good view of the environments details, and it can also be zoomed in or out (on three different settings) for closer views of the characters.

It bears noting that while this fits into the role playing genre, it's not really on a par with

triple A grade titles like Final Fantasy VIII. The graphics are a tremendous improvement, and there's quirkiness to spare, but in the complexity stakes it never strays from the shallow end of the adventure gaming pool. Mature gamers may soon tire of this simplicity.

Still, for any gamer interested in the RPG genre, and even those whose interest lies primarily in platformers, *Alundra 2* offers a well-presented package with enough variation in gameplay and amusing characters to make it a worthy addition to your PlayStation libraries.

Elton Cane

GAME FEATURES

Memory Card

Dual Shock Compatible

SECOND OPINION



KEVIN CHEUNG

I actually didn't like the original *Alundra* all that much. It was such a straight out and out copy of the old SNES *Zelda* series. This sequel, however, is something special. I particularly like the new graphical presentation. Even though it's no FFVIII, the game is strong enough on all fronts to be enjoyable for fans of the genre. You can't ask for much more than that.



STATION

OVERALL: Much improved over the original, but there's still lots of jumping.

| | | |
|-------------|------|--|
| GRAPHICS: | ★★★ | Bright and colourful. The zoom function is good |
| SOUND: | ★★★ | Good use of voice samples but effects and music aren't too great |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★★★★ | Heaps of action, lots of mini games - good fun |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★ | Pretty easy. Won't intimidate the youngsters with pages of stats |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★★ | Good for a few weeks, but a second play through is unlikely |

85
PERCENT

ROLLCAGE STAGE 2

The PlayStation's best upside-down racer: Now better than ever!

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Psygnosis
- Developer
ATD
- Genre
Racing
- Release Date
Out now
- Players
One or two
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
An awesome futuristic racer that puts you in control of flippable cars in a much wider range of environments.

ALTERNATIVES

- Rollcage 1
- Wipeout Series



Suspended tracks, not unlike in F Zero X



Civil engineering's really come along...



Beginners especially can expect to spend a great deal of the game airborne

Rollcage is one of those titles that keeps getting pulled out of the cupboard and played over and over again. Psygnosis, a company not known for holding back sequels has finally released *Rollcage Stage 2* and finally the original has had the workover it so rightly deserved.

ATD have done it again with their insane speed racers that can flip over and keep on going. If anything has changed from the first version to this one, it would have to be that the game is more playable now while providing a more immersive atmosphere.

The first Rollcage was an

awesome experience for the more hardened gamer. Travelling at astounding speeds, you were in control of a vehicle that had tyres larger than the actual body of the car which meant that if you flipped over, the "cage" you were in would roll (hence the name of the game) back into a upright position.

If you could ignore the obvious scientific problem with the wheels spinning in the wrong direction, you were in for a treat. The problem was that due to the speed of the game, any newcomer to gaming could find themselves completely overwhelmed and as such, Rollcage as a party game never really took off.

EVERYONE CAN ROLLCAGE

Stage 2 has changed this around completely and now the Rollcage phenomenon is one for the whole gamut of people who play on Sony's little grey box. Somehow, the developers have made the game less sickeningly disorienting when you flip and roll and much easier to determine the direction you're supposed to go.

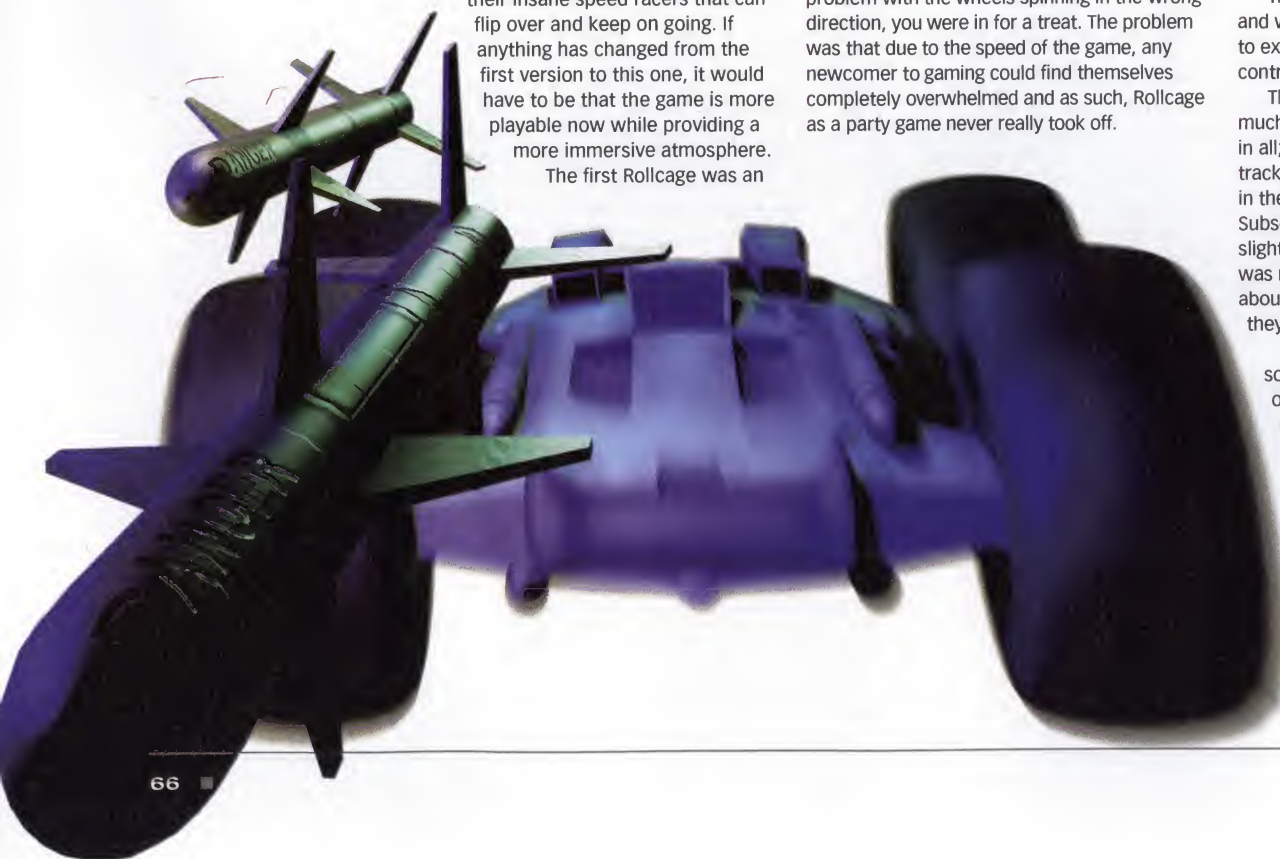
The controls are a little more forgiving too and while still penalising those who oversteer to excess, do provide an increased depth to controlling the vehicles.

The cars themselves haven't changed that much. There are around 16 cars to choose from in all; You begin with three and as you win tracks you are given access to further Rollcages in the various classes such as Patriot, Unity and Subsonic. They have cleaner lines and some slightly increased polygon-count but Rollcage was never about crisp, clear-cut cars, but more about the tracks they race on and the speed they could reach.

There are now six worlds to race on, and some of them look decidedly familiar while others are very new. The environments range from under the sea, to modernistic high-rise complexes, from lava-filled canyons to low-gravity space stations.

The tracks have got a wonderfully natural feel and the curves and racing lines have been designed to reward the careful, high-precision driver in preference to the reckless high-roller who is just as likely to throw themselves off a cliff or into space.

The powerups are also suitably familiar and new at the same time.





Improved graphics: Note the distant redraw point



Yet another way to bespoil the wilderness

Favourites like the shield, the speed boost and homing missiles are now supplemented with much more esoteric tools that can make you swap places with the car in front, shoot lightning out from your tyres to hit the cars on your flanks and an impressive machine gun.

RIGHT ON TRACK

It's still difficult to stay on track for the duration and to face the right direction. All it takes is for you to hit an unexpected piece of rubble in the middle of the road, or an unfeeling friend or computer opponent to give you a shove and, instead of racing forwards, you can end up doing loop-the-loops around the one section of ground, wall and ceilings in tunnels, and even worse in the open-air sections. Thus, it's good to see the button that spins your car around to face the correct direction is still present.

If none of these improvements had been made, we believe *Rollcage Stage 2* would still appeal to most gamers for the increased game modes alone. In single player, there are initially 5 styles to choose from an amazing 12 different types.

The first set of modes are pretty standard - campaign mode and arcade mode. Both of these see you racing four other cars around the various circuits, with campaign circuits being split according to difficulty. Type 1 Campaigns have got four difficulty settings and once you have succeeded there you will have to do it all over again with the other Campaign Types.



Tremendous attention to detail, psychedelic lighting effects, *Rollcage Stage 2* has it all

TIME TRIAL IS A GAME UNTO ITSELF

On top of these modes is the usual Time Trial mode and then two new ones - Training and Scramble. Training at first glance is a way of introducing new players into the world of *Rollcage*, but that goes by the wayside after the first couple of tracks when the sessions become maddeningly difficult. Each session has a goal whether it be collecting the powerups along the way to the finish line or jumping large gaps with the use of speed boosts.

Scramble is sort of like a puzzle-mode. You need to get from point A to point B within a set time. The problem is you may be racing on an ultra-thin track with a drop on either side, or a surface that's extremely bumpy and dangerous for high-speeds. You need to be careful when timing when to speed and when to brake.

The bonus modes you can open up are also nice additions. Besides the extra Campaign types already mentioned, there's Demolition, Pursuit, Survivor and the descriptive "Rubble Soccer". Each of these modes is a game in its own right and well worth fighting the earlier stages to gain access to.

TWO IS ENOUGH

Multiplayer has been catered for with a split-screen 2-player mode. It is a slight disappointment not to see 4-player split-screen action, but that's only because they were able to do it on the PC. Besides this oversight, there are just as many options in multiplayer as there are in solo play.

The tournaments along with Combat tracks prove to be the most popular, but those additional modes mentioned above are also present here. One thing that Psygnosis seem to do well in their racing titles is provide good backing music and *Stage 2* is no exception.

Hardcore *Rollcage* fans may be initially dismayed to hear the hard-techno music is gone, but the funky electric guitar based dance music really gets you in the driving groove and the mix of different styles is a testament to the fact that you don't need hard techno beats to have good music.

You'll most likely find that the sound effects pale into insignificance behind the music. The whining of the engines and squealing of the tyres almost acts like a background noise to emphasise the action-pounding tunes which provide the momentum of the race.

If that wasn't enough, if you're smart enough to open all modes and campaigns, you're likely to find more to keep you going. It's possible to open up mirror mode to all of the tracks along with an extra powerup called Mega Boost. If you thought you were going fast without any sort of boost and went "WOW" the first time you saw the speed boost used, wait 'til you see this sucker in action.

Rollcage Stage 2 reassures me that Psygnosis still know what they're doing, and with graphics like this on our unassuming PlayStation we look forward with great joy to seeing what they can produce on the PS2.

If you don't have *Rollcage*, you can't miss out on this one, while if you've played the first installment to death and your friends are sick of losing on the same old tracks, grab *Rollcage Stage 2* to show them how they can be creamed no matter where you race - and you never know, with the increased accessibility, you may find they're more of a challenge too.

Andrew Parsons

GAME FEATURES

Memory Card

Dual Shock Compatible

SECOND OPINION



JAMES COTTEE

The sense of achievement you got from actually working out how to play the first *Rollcage* has now been replaced with some surreal options that eager beavers can unlock. This combined with some superlative graphics and a distinctive big beat sound make this a worthy sequel.



STATION

OVERALL: One of the better racers out there on the PSX. Stretches the envelope of speed yet again.

| | | |
|-------------|-------|---|
| GRAPHICS: | ★★★★★ | Beautifully natural flowing lines coupled with spectacular explosions |
| SOUND: | ★★★★ | Dig those funky music tracks |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★★★★ | Phenomenal number of tracks and game modes |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★★ | Hold down accelerate and go, go, GO! |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★★★★ | You'll want to keep the music playing in the background |

92
PERCENT

RESIDENT EVIL: SURVIVOR

With a change in format comes a change in quality...

FACT FILE

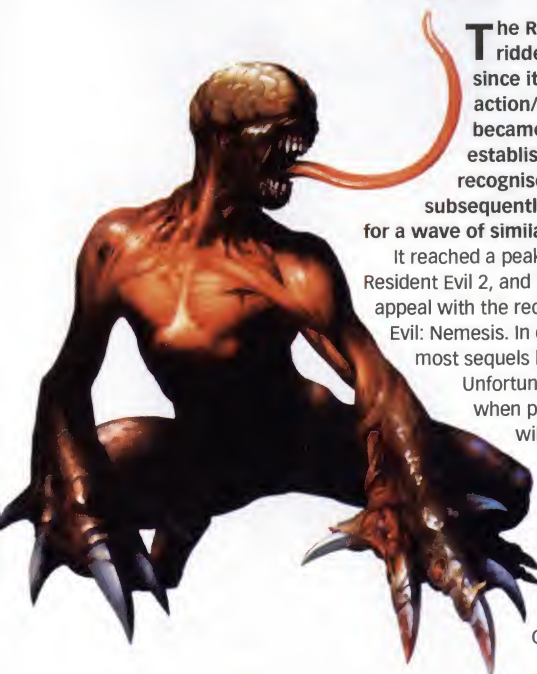
- Publisher
OziSoft
- Developer
Capcom
- Genre
Shooter
- Release Date
Out now
- Players
One
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
Just can't get enough of that Resident Evil action.

ALTERNATIVES

- Time Crisis
- Point Blank 2



This is about as exciting as Resident Evil: Survivor gets. See zombie. Shoot with gay abandon. Move to next room. See zombie. Shoot again...



The Resident Evil series has ridden a crest of acclaim ever since it arrived on the action/adventure scene. It became responsible for establishing the genre now recognised as survival horror, and subsequently, opened the floodgates for a wave of similar titles.

It reached a peak in its popularity with Resident Evil 2, and managed to sustain its appeal with the recently released Resident Evil: Nemesis. In doing so it achieved what most sequels have failed to do: improve.

Unfortunately there comes a time when publishers and developers will flog their product a fraction too far.

Encouraged by the unprecedented success of the Resident Evil trio, Capcom have pushed through a fourth installment, *Survivor*. Capcom is notorious for



Comin' atcha at 10 frames per second!

churning out rehash after rehash of the same game, in an attempt to capitalise on initial accomplishments (Streetfighter being the obvious example that comes to mind).

The ultimate result being that the series degenerates at a rapid rate. Although the implementation of the G-Con in *Survivor* sounds excellent in theory, the game falls way below par and any appeal that might have been derived from using a gun to waste zombies is quickly lost.

The concept of *Resident Evil: Survivor* and G-Con conjures images of House of the Dead in a Resident Evil type mould. Unfortunately, there are no similarities whatsoever, and *Resident Evil: Survivor* is very close to being the absolute worst reason we have ever had to point a light gun at a television screen. And we don't exaggerate.

CONTROLLING WHERE YOU GO

The first, and most dramatic, discrepancy is that *Survivor* is free roaming. Unlike every other shooting game you may have played, *Survivor* allows you to navigate. How you may ask? Well the first answer is, very badly. The second answer is, with your G-Con. Now you can understand the first answer.

Combining a method that involves pointing the G-Con away from the screen to move forward and the buttons on either side of the barrel to turn with pointing the G-Con at the screen to shoot (obviously), *Survivor* undoubtedly boasts one of the most inconvenient and impractical control systems ever to grace a console.



He can't chase you without legs!



The dogs aren't that scary anymore



Blasting the zombies will reward you with lashings of blood



Mum, I'd like you to meet my new friend



Monsters with less flesh

Although it is simple enough to pick up, its execution in the game environment is laboured and frustrating. The simple urge to turn around requires pressing a button twice and waving the gun from side to side for what seems an eternity. As you can appreciate, this gives more than ample time for any creature intent on mauling you to gouge a few chunks from the back of your head.

The movement nightmare is exacerbated by the inability to look in any other direction other than straight ahead (including up or down). Consequently, the first indication that an enemy is in the room is when your health starts to deplete. When the opportunity to finally shoot at something arrives, you sit back and lazily press on the trigger until it waves and then drops to the ground.

There is no skill required in aiming as since there is no head movement, the zombie will stand plum in front of your crosshairs until it's plugged with ammo.



What makes this even worse is that the gun doesn't fire at the same speed that you press the trigger. In fact if confronted with having to identify a positive aspect of the control method, I would have to resort to saying its better than using a telephone (but only just).

ALL ROADS LEAD TO...

The non-linear design allows you to choose your path, of which there are several. But the storyline is so dry, you'll be yearning for one, brief path, straight to the end of the game. The puzzles are so frustratingly straight forward, usually consisting of a locked door and a key to open it in the adjacent room.

As you can imagine, this becomes rather tedious, with variations on this formula being far between. Each of the various individual routes lead to the same main areas anyway, so they really end up being little more than a different coloured corridor to a common destination. All the old enemies are back: zombies, lickens, spiders etc. but their animations are horrendous

and their appearance grainy and pixellated. In fact, the entire game just so happens to look grainy and pixellated.

The backgrounds are drab and devoid of detail, while the rooms are filled with obligatory filing cabinets and little else. Despite such a lack of graphical credibility the game still suffers from chronic slowdown. Errors such as rooms astonishingly filling with zombies after you've already been inside and

searched the joint from top to bottom, add to the perplexing nature of the game.

RIDICULOUS SOUND

The sound has been ported from its predecessors but someone has ably managed to stuff up what was used to be a decent formula. The habitual morbid music coupled with the odd eerie noise is frequently ruined by a high pitched sound that has no relevance to the game, and seems to serve no other purpose other than to make you detest *Survivor* even more than usual. The continual, unchanging groaning of zombies soon becomes monotonous while the mute button on the remote becomes increasingly enticing.

Resident Evil: Survivor can be described in no lesser terms than horrendous. Marring a reputation that has been four years in the making, Capcom should have definitely spent longer in the production room or if not, relegated it to the bin. Whatever interest *Resident Evil: Survivor* with the G-Con may create for you, thirty seconds playing the game will destroy it for you.

Keith Talent

GAME FEATURES

Memory Card

Standard Controller

SECOND OPINION



KEVIN CHEUNG

Dear, dear, dear. This game should simply not have been released. Capcom probably had the best of intentions while coming up with the concept for this game, but the execution has been nothing short of appalling! Dodgy framerate, sluggish controls, horribly pixellated textures...

It's almost as though some work experience kids were placed in charge of production! Some people have already asked me where they can buy this game before we went to press... who knows how many people have already been duped into paying money for this title...

STATION

OVERALL: This game will scare you, but for all the wrong reasons. Nice idea, lousy execution.

| | | |
|-------------|-----|--|
| GRAPHICS: | ★ | Will make your retinas burn |
| SOUND: | ★★ | Essentially okay, but often ruined |
| GAMEPLAY: | ★ | Retarded, and oh so very bad |
| DIFFICULTY: | ★★★ | Difficult to play for longer than five minutes |
| LIFESPAN: | ★★ | If you could stick at it - but you won't |

40
PERCENT

COLONY WARS RED SUN

The finest space combat game yet for the PlayStation. Are you elite?

FACT FILE

■ Publisher
Sony

■ Developer
Psygnosis

■ Genre
Space combat

■ Release Date
Out now

■ Players
One

■ No. of CD's
One

■ Expectations
The third Colony Wars Game is the biggest & best yet.



Not unlike the AT-AT walkers from Empire

The PlayStation has been almost starved for games in the genre of white-knuckle space combat. Aside from the parade of space themed shoot-em-ups, there has only really been the first two Colony Wars games, and while these were noble efforts, they suffered from convoluted controls and a difficulty level that was too high for the casual gamer to get around.

It is thus that the third Colony Wars game was viewed as the last best hope for a good space combat game in the PSX, and *Red Sun* fulfils this role marvelously.

The first thing you notice about the game is the quality of the production. The opening movie and all subsequent cut scenes are of stunning quality, with excellent CG and an orchestrated score. The

characters and plot are set up in such a fashion so that completing each incremental stage of the game reveals more of the reality obscured from you, and in this universe nothing is what it seems.

FAR OUT, MAN

The mission path, rather than being of the usual tree design which is affected by your wins and losses, is much more open. You play Valdemar, a mercenary aligned to a mysterious destiny, and not the Empire or the Rebels who you work for.



Whether they be giant monsters, mecha or space fighters, the enemies are detailed and ruthless



Send a missile through just the right window

You can do missions for either party as you see fit, and your performance determines how much money you earn for repairs and upgrades to your space fighter.

The plot is carried forward by the occasional mission for your mysterious benefactors, and it's these that are the hardest, but also reward you with glossy cut scenes and fragments of the truth.

Missions are either in a planetary atmosphere or in outer space, and your enemies vary from pirates to tanks, giant monsters and the forces of the two superpowers in this galaxy spanning conflict. Your environments range wildly in shape,

countour and threat level, and the only deficiency in detail is the obscuring fog that sits heavy on the planets of the Magenta System.

There are titanic mechanical war machines, huge spinning starbases and nebulae in every colour of the rainbow. This space epic is designed to be appreciated to the full with most of your senses.

BOLDLY GO! SPLIT INFINITIVES!

The controls are tight and responsive, and there is sufficient room for dogfighting prowess to make this more than just a matter of point and shoot. The game represents a vast and varied challenge with 50 odd missions, and if there's any complaint to be had is that there isn't more to the game.

This was developed by the same studio that brought us *Wipeout 3*, and if you look you can see traces of this in the graphical robustness and polished quality the two games share.

Colony Wars Red Sun is easily the best space combat game to date on the PlayStation, and has succeeded in reinventing the series with an unmatched balance of sound, visuals and above all the very best in 3D space combat action. This represents an essential purchase for space cadets everywhere.

James Cotte

GAME FEATURES

Memory Card

Dual Shock Compatible

STATION

■ OVERALL: The best game of its type yet on the PlayStation. A space adventure tour-de-force!

■ GRAPHICS:

★★★★

A little exaggerated, but bright and functional

■ SOUND:

★★★★★

Awesome soundtrack, great voice acting, nice effects

■ GAMEPLAY:

★★★★

Managing multiple threats and objectives is a buzz

■ DIFFICULTY:

★★★

It makes a change from the near-impossible prequels

■ LIFESPAN:

★★★

There's every chance you'll play it more than once

94
PERCENT

HYPER»



X BOX

The truth is in here

OUT NOW

DREAMCAST * X-BOX * PLAYSTATION 2 * PC * PLAYSTATION * NINTENDO 64 * GAME BOY

MARVEL VS CAPCOM

Your favourite comic characters belt the crap out of Capcom's finest

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Ozisoft
- Developer
Capcom
- Genre
Fighting
- Release Date
Out now
- Players
One or two
- Features
Memory Card
Standard Controller

Given the success of the X-men Vs Streetfighter and *Marvel Vs Capcom* games at the arcades, it was only a matter of time before this conversion appeared on PlayStation. Those looking for spectacular fighting action between much-loved and loathed characters can finally get their hands on this game for some fists-and-fireballs action.

Marvel vs Capcom is similar to the many other titles in the Street Fighter franchise, but diverges from the formula in several areas. It has proudly retained 2D graphics (many of which are spectacular, especially the entertaining backgrounds), it boasts characters from both Capcom arcade



games and Marvel comics (some well-known and some obscure), and it hosts the largest array of special moves in any fighting game. If hardcore realistic fighting (ie Tekken or Virtua Fighter) is what you're into, this may not be the title for you. On the other hand, it's hard not to enjoy watching

your opponent being wiped out by spectacular explosions from the countless rockets and bombs you have hurled around the screen.

Marvel vs Capcom offers your standard options: arcade mode, versus, practice, and tag. In arcade and versus mode you select two characters, but one of them is your secondary character who can only be brought on screen to assist you in pulverising your enemy.

Unfortunately, many of the characters can only be chosen as secondary allies, rather than starting characters. Still, there is a large array to choose from. In tag mode, you alternate between your characters once your life has run out, ala King of Fighters.

Despite there being no FMV scenes or storyline to speak of, *Marvel vs Capcom* delivers well in providing super-powered, high-flying action. Definitely worth adding to the collection of the fighting game enthusiast.

Leon Tranter

STATION

■ **OVERALL:** One of the best 2D fighters yet. If you love Marvel or Capcom, this is a worthwhile purchase.

- | | | |
|----------------------|------|--|
| ■ GRAPHICS: | ★★★★ | Stuck with 2D, milked it for all it's worth |
| ■ SOUND: | ★★★ | Pretty catchy music, though nothing out of this world |
| ■ GAMEPLAY: | ★★★★ | Bucketloads of fun, especially with a friend |
| ■ DIFFICULTY: | ★★★ | Beginner's option makes button-mashing a delight |
| ■ LIFESPAN: | ★★★ | Lots of moves to learn, though single player isn't great |

83
PERCENT



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WWF SMACKDOWN

One for more than candy-assed monkeys

FACT FILE

■ Publisher
THQ

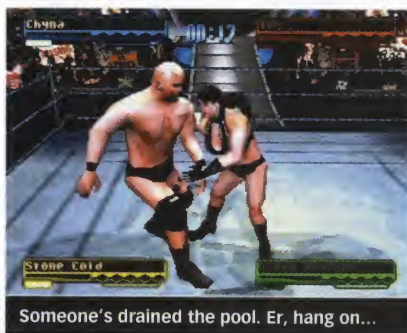
■ Developer
Yukes

■ Genre
Wrestling

■ Release Date
Out Now

■ Players
One to four

■ Features
Multitap
Dual Shock



The phenomenal popularity of muscular, oily men who are getting hot and sweaty with each other just never ceases to amaze the fans, while the uninitiated (and supposedly much more intelligent) members of the public are generally left rather dumbstruck.

WWF Smackdown is THQ's first PlayStation game since swindling the WWF license from Acclaim. I think we can get down on our knees and thank The Rock that they did. Smackdown is the best wrestling game on the PlayStation. Instead of continuing making games similar to their atrocious WCW PSX titles, THQ have taken a leaf out of their N64 book, thus creating a game to rival their own WWF Wrestlemania 2000 on Nintendo.

There are enough gameplay modes to stop a herd of charging buffalo with. There are the standard Single, Tag and Cage matches but the greatest additions are the I Quit and Anywhere Fall matches. The ability to fight in areas outside of

the arena was first taken up by WCW Mayhem but WWF Smackdown has evolved the feature into more than just a gimmick.

The season mode could have delivered so much more but anything that involves the drama of wrestling, rather than just the muscle flexing action is opening it up for the games to follow, and believe me there will be a lot of wrestling games to follow.

With Mayhem, Attitude and Hardcore Revolution I was beginning to think that the genre would collapse under the weight of its own muscle, but WWF Smackdown is like a breath of fresh air (or the whiff of smelly locker rooms, whichever you prefer).

Troy Gorman



STATION

■ OVERALL: WWF Wrestlers using THQ's grappling method makes for the most "realistic" wrestling game yet.

| | | |
|---------------|------|---|
| ■ GRAPHICS: | ★★★★ | Convincingly disturbing spandex and leather abounds |
| ■ SOUND: | ★★★ | The usual ringside anthems |
| ■ GAMEPLAY: | ★★★★ | Wrestling enthusiasts will find all their favourite moves in here |
| ■ DIFFICULTY: | ★★★ | The simple, cartoonish moves take little expertise to master |
| ■ LIFESPAN: | ★★★★ | About as deep as a wrestling game can get |

85

PERCENT

MUPPET RACEMANIA

Why are there so many games about go karts?

FACT FILE

■ Publisher
Sony

■ Developer
Traveller's Tales

■ Genre
Kart Racing

■ Release Date
Out now

■ Players
One or two

■ Features
Memory card
Dual Shock

The Muppets, from their seminal beginnings in the 50s, to their 70s TV dominance and their 90s movie ventures have moved from being a cultural phenomenon to more of a universal metaphor for the human condition. Anyone who watches a few minutes of Sesame Street will realise this.

The Muppets, through their hugely expressive features, crazy voices and wild gesticulations seem far more human than the actual humans who share the show with them. Elmo seems much more child-like than the dumbstruck children with whom he interacts.

So with every other franchise in the

universe from VIP to the Thunderbirds having games made about them, it was inevitable Jim Henson's legacy would find its way to the PlayStation. Muppet Racemania is the result, a go kart racing game that scours the entire Muppets back catalogue to forge its vision.

The settings for the racetracks are taken from all six Muppet movies, and once unlocked, 25 different Muppets can be played with their own interchangeable vehicles.

This is a game more suited to young children than the adolescent gamer. Tikes playing this will take it at face value, and the adults supervising them will get a nostalgic tingle out of it.

The characters and tracks are highly detailed, but sluggish handling and



lack of a four player mode limits the party-factor on this one.

If you're old enough to buy your own games, then Crash Team Racing is probably the go. But if the recipient of this watches Sesame St in their spare time, Muppet Racemania is ideal.

James Cottee

STATION

■ OVERALL: Not a serious racing game by any stretch, but more of a pacifier for the kids.

| | | |
|---------------|------|--|
| ■ GRAPHICS: | ★★★★ | Very detailed; The Muppets, cars and tracks look great |
| ■ SOUND: | ★★★ | The Muppets theme and some decent in-game stuff |
| ■ GAMEPLAY: | ★★★ | No the best kart game in the world, but OK for kids |
| ■ DIFFICULTY: | ★★ | Designed to entertain children, not torment them |
| ■ LIFESPAN: | ★★★ | Lots of hidden stuff, and a universal appeal |

76

PERCENT

RUGRATS 2: STUDIO TOUR

The latest semi-innocent adventures of TV's favourite nappy-wearers

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Viacom
- Developer
THQ/N Space
- Genre
Kid's Platformer
- Release Date
Out Now
- Players
One to four
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
A multi-platform romp that will keep kids entertained for many hours.

GAME FEATURES

- Memory Card
- Dual Shock Compatible



Tommy and the Rugrats gang get in trouble again, this time on the set. We reviewed *Rugrats 2: Studio Tour* a couple of issues ago and we said it was already looking impressive with just a few tweaks needed to make it a great game. Well, now its time has come and looking at the final game we have mixed feelings about *Rugrats 2*.

This is due to the fact that the concerns we had that there were a few holes in the development haven't been picked up by the developers and the game is almost the same as the last incomplete version we saw. Despite this, it's still one of the best titles on the market for the young ones and should prove as popular as the first PlayStation *Rugrats* title.

Games aimed at young children have to be very careful. They obviously have to be accessible to those who the game is designed for, but at the same time not be so utterly simplistic that anyone older than 10 will throw the controller down in disgust after 10 minutes.

THQ have succeeded with both *Rugrats* titles in this avenue by allowing the young ones to play any of the levels in a sort of practice mode from the main menu, while those slightly older can attempt the story mode which strings the levels together as a loosely cohesive whole.

NOT ENTIRELY UNLIKE A PIG'S BREAKFAST

The reason why we say loosely is that the very storyline chosen by the developers has allowed them to be very widespread in their game styles. The basic premise is that the kids have been taken on a tour of a movie studio by their parents. In the initial commotion of arriving, they go a-wandering and lose their folks.

Then, somehow, one of the boys locks himself away behind a door with a huge number of locks. The rest of the game is all about finding the keys to those locks and to do that each of the remaining children have to traverse through a different movie set succeeding at a number of tasks.

Graphically, the game looks like it used the same engine as the now aging original title, flaws and all. Although the intended audience will not notice the occasional clipping or invisible obstacle, those who are older definitely will, and it's disappointing to see that there doesn't appear to have been any work done in this area. Not a pretty picture.



That's one small step, and one giant head



Attention kids: Petrol does not taste good



Rugrats Team Racing? Hardly...

Despite this, the developers are to be praised with their attempts to introduce more genres into the game while expanding on those activities that their feedback told them was most successful.

To that end, you'll find not one, but two, entire 9-hole mini-golf courses. There are a number of "collect x-number of item-y" type levels, and new in this game are proper racing levels, both on foot and in go-karts. There are a couple of shooting gallery episodes also, which parents with a concern for shooting games should be aware of.

The most problematic area of a title like this is often knowing what you're actually supposed to do in each level of the game. The first title in

the series attempted to do just that by popping up a page or two of text at the beginning of the level. Unfortunately, this didn't work too well, as their intended audience doesn't have the patience to read this much.

In this second iteration, THQ have done away with the text and replaced it with voice-overs which tell the tale for each challenge. This is a much better implementation and because they are optional, provides increased access to the game.

Overall, this game is probably best for those with small children, due to the cute and well known characters and the enjoyment they'll get from the wide variety of sub-games.

Rhys Jacobssen

STATION

■ **OVERALL:** Doesn't do a whole lot to improve on the first in the series, but is still eminently suitable for the kids.

- | | | |
|----------------------|------|---|
| ■ GRAPHICS: | ★★★ | The clipping and invisible obstacle flaws are obvious |
| ■ SOUND: | ★★★★ | Music can be irritating but it's all true to the show |
| ■ GAMEPLAY: | ★★★ | A HUGE variety of levels will keep any low attention span kid happy |
| ■ DIFFICULTY: | ★ | Designed for kids, could you expect anything else? |
| ■ LIFESPAN: | ★★ | Everyone grows up sometime... That's when this'll get ditched |

69
PERCENT

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STREET FIGHTER EX2 PLUS

The world's favourite 2D fighting game characters go 3D. Again...

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Ozisoft
- Developer
Capcom
- Genre
Fighting
- Release Date
Out Now
- Players
One or two
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
Has Streetfighter completely lost the plot now?

GAME FEATURES

- Memory Card
- Standard Controller

Everyone remembers when Street Fighter 2 came out and took the arcade fighting world by storm. A few movies, countless marketing gimmicks and tie-ins, and a slew of strangely named games later, many are wondering where it all went wrong.

Whereas the Tekken and Virtua Fighter series made carefully-executed improvements on each of their sequels, Streetfighter seemed to languish in Limbo with little direction. Sadly, this title confirms this trend.

Street Fighter EX2 Plus is a "3D" fighter in the loosest and most unfortunate sense of the word. The characters are modelled and rendered in 3D, but unlike the smooth and elegant characters of Tekken 3 and Virtua Fighter 3, they look blocky and clumsy.

There is no sidestep or lateral movement feature, so the fighting occurs solely along one axis. The backgrounds are sometimes interesting (like the level with mist above the floor), but are generally bland and cheap looking. The character motions look as silly and unrealistic as they have in the last couple of Street Fighter games.

TACKY MUSIC

The music in this title is tacky at best, and often quite annoying. Sound effects are fairly well executed, although many are becoming sick of the tired "ha-dou-ken!" and other strange war cries of the characters. The menus and interface look like they were rushed together in the final days of production.

There are admittedly a large assortment of characters to choose from, some of which we have seen before and others make first-time appearances. Many of them are quite indistinguishable from each other.

The same tactics and gameplay exists here as has existed in Street Fighter games since their peak (Street Fighter 2 Hyper Fight, or arguably New Challengers). Your success



revolves purely around being able to most successfully execute the "special moves", which involve quarter-circle motions, and are difficult to do on a playstation controller.

Combos can be strung together, and your character can "power-up" to perform a strange and silly sequence of attacks involving meteors falling about the place, for example. Other games such as the Marvel Vs Capcom series have used this concept more successfully.

UNUSUAL GAMEPLAY OPTIONS

Street Fighter EX2 Plus does offer some unusual gameplay options. Apart from the usual Arcade, Vs and Practice modes, there is also a Bonus game and Director mode. Bonus game involves the boring barrel smashing we are used to in the bonus sections of the arcade game, and is only recommended for five year olds, or those with a severe hatred of barrels.

Director mode however is quite interesting: you get to beat up a lifeless opponent as in Practice mode, but you are actually creating a



"movie": you can review and re-edit your production including changing camera angles, and can later show to your friends how callously you karate-chopped the helpless automaton chosen for destruction.

Novelties like this however can't rescue Street Fighter EX2 Plus from its overwhelming mediocrity. There aren't any glaring flaws in the game, it just doesn't really offer anything new, or do anything better than other games have already done them. Street Fighter fanatics may enjoy the "3D" graphics and camera angles, but the discerning fighting fan would be better off looking elsewhere.

Leon Tranter

STATION

■ OVERALL: Street Fighter sheds what little merit remains in the franchise when made into a knock-off like this one.

- GRAPHICS: ★★★ Should have stayed with 2D
- SOUND: ★★ Effects are ok, though the music is pretty awful
- GAMEPLAY: ★★ Offers basically nothing new
- DIFFICULTY: ★★★ Start practicing those quarter circles, people
- LIFESPAN: ★★ Director mode may keep you entertained for a little while

60
PERCENT

MICRO MANIACS

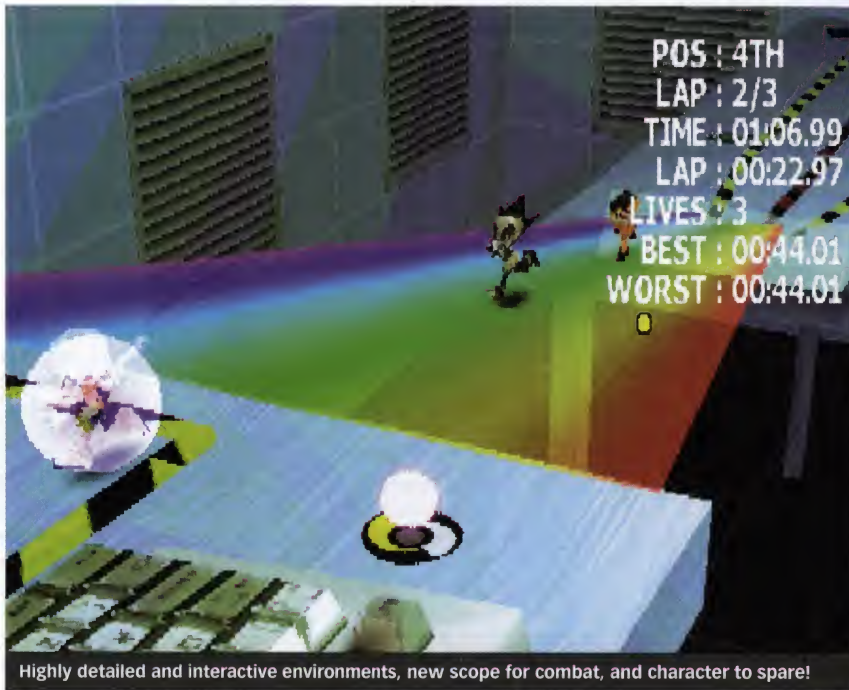
Micro Machines returns, and the little people are on the loose!

FACT FILE

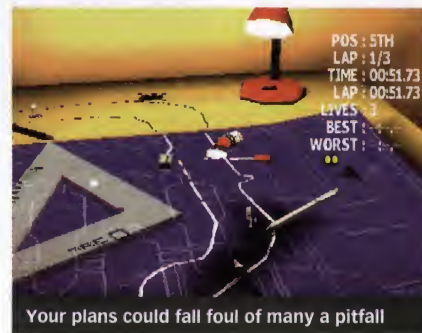
- Publisher
Ozisoft
- Developer
Codemasters
- Genre
Racing
- Release Date
Out Now
- Players
One to eight
- No. of CD's
One
- Expectations
A pure party game that can have the appearance of being "kiddish" but provides enjoyment at all levels.

GAME FEATURES

- Memory Card
- Dual Shock Compatible



Highly detailed and interactive environments, new scope for combat, and character to spare!



Your plans could fall foul of many a pitfall

Codemasters usually bring out quality titles. One of the ways they do this is by using tried and true formulae with enough fine-tuning and minor improvements in subsequent instalments to keep fans happy.

This isn't always the case and looking at titles such as the very original *Micro Machines* and their forays into the sporting world with *Mike Tyson Boxing* and of course the classic *Colin McRae* show their commitment to quality product.

THE SAME...

Micro Maniacs however, is most definitely in the former category and, like other sequels from Codies, is a joy to play for newcomers as well as those who loved the older version, *Micro Machines V3*. In fact, those who played *Micro Machines* before will feel quite at home racing around the *Micro Maniacs* circuits.

There are a lot of similarities including the option to play up to 8 players on individual controllers or to allow two players to share the one controller. The tracks are very reminiscent too, with scenarios such as bedrooms, kitchens, restaurants and the odd circuit in the backyard. These tracks are littered with objects designed for the specific context; some of them are very familiar indeed - anyone remember the sleeping cat?

...BUT DIFFERENT

Lest you begin to think that this is just a blatant marketing retread, you'd better scan over the new features. There are now 37 tracks to race on, and yes, some of the settings are familiar, but there is a huge variety to choose from, much more than before.

How would you like to race over the top of a racing rally car, jumping over windscreen wipers and sliding down the back window? If that doesn't sound exciting, *Heart Bypass* puts you in an operating theatre including running right down the middle of the patient.

In addition to the myriad of settings, you will find at times that the *Maniacs* need to race in craft suitable for the track. Examples are riding skateboards in *Half Pipe Dream*, jetskis in *Jet Set Go*, and on bumblebees in *Apiary Japery*!

There are 8 characters to choose from, but you can unlock another 4 as you complete stages in the challenges. And to add to the complexity of the game, each character has their

own powerups. Rather than everyone picking up the mines or a power-shield, Pyra will receive Fireballs in the same place where *Waldo* will gain a Laser Cannon and *V4* can expect his Plasma Punch.

As you progress through the challenges, you'll gain boosts to the abilities of the character you are playing. These increases are retained so you can build up the abilities of your favourites for future multiplayer parties.

The controls have been finetuned to provide a simplistic and enjoyable experience. You no longer are required to hold the accelerate button down. Instead, using the left thumbstick, you point in the direction you wish to run and your character does the work. This does away with the complaint about *Micro Machines V3* which was that the controls were too hard to get a handle on quickly.

Game options are inherited directly from the older game, including Time Trial, Vs. and Vs. Teams options. You gain access to the first

16 tracks immediately and have to come at least second in your races to progress and thus open up the other tracks for racing.

All in all, *Micro Maniacs* is a combination of exciting new action and a retro feel that's reminiscent of one of the earliest titles on the PSX. This game is not to be missed by anyone who considers themselves a fan of either Codemasters or racing games.

Andrew Parsons



STATION

■ **OVERALL:** *Micro Maniacs* will be one of those games that you pull out at parties or if you need a quick fix of PSX.

- **GRAPHICS:** ★★★★★ Varied, large environments with lots of interactive track elements
- **SOUND:** ★★★★★ Great backing tracks and individual victory shouts
- **GAMEPLAY:** ★★★★★ Simple + fun = addictive as all hell
- **DIFFICULTY:** ★★★ Easy controls but tight circuits
- **LIFESPAN:** ★★★★★ Will be at the front of your shelf as long as you have a PlayStation

88
PERCENT

METAL GEAR SOLID

A long time coming, but MGS was worth the wait

FACT FILE

■ Publisher
Konami

■ Developer
Konami

■ Genre
Action/Adventure

■ Price
\$49.95

■ Score
97%



The release of *Metal Gear Solid* was long anticipated and surrounded in speculation. Pitched by Konami as a defining masterpiece of the action/adventure genre, it really did prove to live up to expectation.

MGS revolves around an intricate storyline, filled with fascinating characters and what can only be described as superlative gameplay. Instead of the customary walk and shoot method style of play that had become established in games such as *Resident Evil*, *MGS* offered many novel elements. This resulted in an experience that was more cerebral and more reliant on the use of stealth.

The plot of *MGS* revolves around an aptly named character called Solid Snake, a member of a top-secret organization called Fox Hound. Snake's mission is to infiltrate a base that has been overrun by terrorists (intent on instigating nuclear war), who just happen to be ex-members of your unit.

The game becomes very absorbing as the action unravels, and is as valuable for its plot as it is for its gameplay. The story unfolds through a series of cut-scenes and the occasional CG, which acquaints you with the background of the characters and the game.

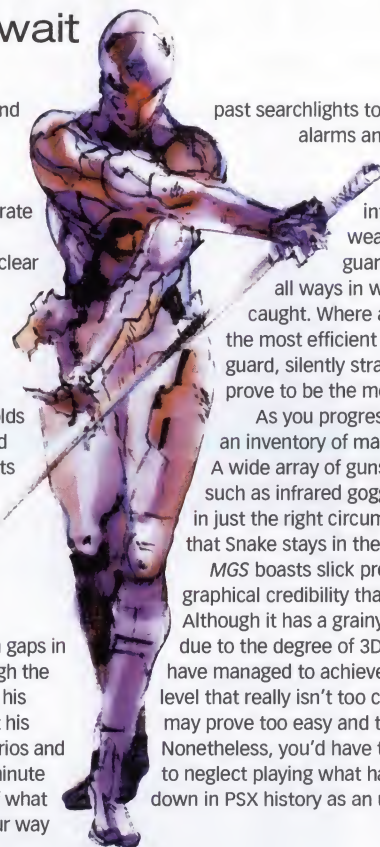
Additionally, Snake is in regular contact with operatives of his unit, who aid him in his mission as well as filling him in on gaps in the storyline. On his travels through the base, Snake must make use of all his training skills and the inventory at his disposal to negotiate tricky scenarios and cunning enemies. Even the first minute of the game gives an indication of what is required as you must sneak your way

past searchlights to avoid sounding the alarms and inevitable capture. Walking through puddles, banging into walls, firing a weapon or entering a guards range of sight are all ways in which you can get caught. Where a weapon might be the most efficient method to kill one guard, silently strangling him will prove to be the most effective.

As you progress, Snake acquires an inventory of mammoth proportions. A wide array of guns and other utilities such as infrared goggles must be utilised in just the right circumstances to ensure that Snake stays in the land of the living.

MGS boasts slick presentation and graphical credibility that exceeds the norm. Although it has a grainy effect, this is only due to the degree of 3D detail the designers have managed to achieve. With a difficulty level that really isn't too challenging, *MGS* may prove too easy and too short for some. Nonetheless, you'd have to be off your trolley to neglect playing what has already gone down in PSX history as an undisputed winner.

Keith Talent



RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

The undisputed king of arcade style racing



FACT FILE

■ Publisher
Namco

■ Developer
Namco

■ Genre
Racing

■ Price
\$49.95

■ Score
80%

You only have to watch *Ridge Racer Type 4*'s intro sequence to reach the conclusion that that you're going to love the game. Opening with a very catchy theme tune and a very saucy hitchhiker, *Ridge Racer Type 4* is all class from start to finish.

Aside from obviously appealing to racing simulation aficionados, *RR4* is a game that is so easy to pick up and enjoy that even the most ardent anti-racing despots will grudgingly give *RR4* more than a second glance.

The game's primary mode is grand prix. From the choice of four teams and four manufacturers, your aim is to complete all tracks and unlock over 300 cars. Depending on the team and manufacturer selected, a unique storyline will then unfold.

Although the plot isn't of RPG proportions, it does add a touch more to the usual scheme of things. As you progress through the competition, you will be rewarded with much faster



cars, the attributes of which are determined upon your position in the heat of each race.

There is a choice between the drift or grip style of driving. Where drift enables you to perform power-slides, grip is for those who seek a realistic representation of a car's driving physics. Aside from excellent track design, *RR4* boasts a high frame rate and a crisp resolution. Despite occasional lapses into clipping and a hint of pop-up, you will be hard-pressed to find fault with the game from a visual standpoint.

The tracks themselves are not in abundance, and they rely more on variations of the same model to create different courses.

Although this isn't what you would call a plus to the game it doesn't detract as much as you might think it would.

The only downfall in *RR4* is its longevity. The game can be completed far too quickly, so for those who don't like playing a game through over and over, replay value may be a factor to consider. Notwithstanding, having reached a platinum price, there really isn't an excuse for any avid Playstation fan to miss out on a copy of *RR4*. It won't keep you hooked for months, but it's undoubtedly worthy of a platinum release and a subsequent purchase.

Keith Talent



PLAYSTATION RELEASE SCHEDULE

Below is a list of upcoming software titles for the PlayStation. While this can give you a rough idea of what's coming out, all of these games are subject to delay or cancellation without notice.

| GAME TITLE | DEVELOPER | DISTRIBUTOR | RELEASE |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Euro 2000 | EA UK | EA | April 2000 |
| Everybody's Golf 2 | SCEI | Sony | April 2000 |
| Gekido | Infogrames | Ozisoft | April 2000 |
| Ghoul Panic | Namco | Sony | April 2000 |
| Hydro Thunder | Midway | Metro Games | April 2000 |
| Jedi Power Battles | LucasArts | Metro Games | April 2000 |
| Jimmy Whites Cueball 2 | Virgin | Ozisoft | April 2000 |
| Medieval 2 | SCEE | Sony | April 2000 |
| Muppet Race Mania | Travelers Tales | Sony | April 2000 |
| NHL Rock The Rink | EA | EA | April 2000 |
| Radical Bikers | Infogrames | Ozisoft | April 2000 |
| Ronaldo V-Football | Infogrames | Ozisoft | April 2000 |
| Star Ixiom | Psygnosis | Sony | April 2000 |
| Star Ocean Second Story | Enix | Sony | April 2000 |
| Syphon Filter 2 | 989 Studios | Sony | April 2000 |
| World Championship Snooker | Codemasters | Ozisoft | April 2000 |
| Armorines | Acclaim | Acclaim | May 2000 |
| Battle Tanx - Global Assault | 3DO | Sony | May 2000 |
| Dukes Of Hazard | - | Ubi Soft | May 2000 |
| F1 Racing Championship | - | Ubi Soft | May 2000 |
| Jackie Chan Stuntmaster | Radical | Sony | May 2000 |
| Legend Of Legaia | SCE | Sony | May 2000 |
| NFS Porsche Unleashed | EA | EA | May 2000 |
| Pool Palace Academy | - | Ubi Soft | May 2000 |
| Rally Masters | Infogrames | Ozisoft | May 2000 |
| Rescue Shot | SCEI | Sony | May 2000 |
| Alundra 2 | - | Activision | June 2000 |
| AST 2000 | - | Ubi Soft | June 2000 |
| Colin McRae Rally 2 | Codemasters | Ozisoft | June 2000 |
| Gauntlet Legends | Atari Games | Playcorp | June 2000 |
| Infestation | - | Ubi Soft | June 2000 |
| J McGrath Supercross 2000 | - | Acclaim | June 2000 |
| Mo Ho | - | Jack Of All Games | June 2000 |
| N-Gen | Curly Monsters | Ozisoft | June 2000 |
| Supercross 2000 | - | Acclaim | June 2000 |
| Vagrant Story | Square | Sony | June 2000 |
| World's Scariest Police | Fox Interactive | EA | June 2000 |
| X-Men Mutant Academy | - | Activision | June 2000 |
| Bass Hunter | - | Jack Of All Games | July 2000 |
| Dark Stone | - | Jack Of All Games | July 2000 |
| ECW Anarchy Rules | - | Acclaim | July 2000 |
| Front Mission 3 | Square | Sony | July 2000 |
| Mike Tyson Boxing | Codemasters | Ozisoft | July 2000 |
| Rugby 2001 | EA Australia | EA | July 2000 |
| Team Buddies | Psygnosis | Sony | July 2000 |
| World Touring Cars | Codemasters | Ozisoft | July 2000 |
| Obi-Wan | LucasArts | Metro Games | August 2000 |
| Parasite Eve 2 | Square | Sony | August 2000 |
| Re-Volt | - | Acclaim | August 2000 |
| Alien Resurrection | Fox Interactive | EA | Sept 2000 |
| Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn | - | Activision | Sept 2000 |
| Rayman 2 | Ubi Soft | Ubi Soft | Sept 2000 |
| Simpsons Bowling | Fox Interactive | EA | Sept 2000 |
| Spiderman | Activision | Activision | Sept 2000 |
| Vanishing Point | - | Acclaim | Sept 2000 |
| Austin Powers | - | Jack Of All Games | October 2000 |
| Batman | - | Ubi Soft | October 2000 |
| Final Fantasy IX | Square | Sony | October 2000 |
| HBO Boxing | - | Acclaim | October 2000 |
| Tenchu 2 | Sony Music | Activision | October 2000 |
| Wipeout Director's Cut | Psygnosis | Sony | October 2000 |
| Buffy The Vampire Slayer | EA | EA | Nov 2000 |
| Inspector Gadget | - | Ubi Soft | Nov 2000 |
| Simpsons Wrestling | Fox Interactive | EA | Nov 2000 |
| The Mummy | - | GT Interactive | Nov 2000 |
| Tony Hawk 2 | Neversoft | Activision | Nov 2000 |
| Bear Rape Fantasy IV | Next Gaming | Next Gaming | Just Kidding |

13 PREPLAY CONTENTS



KESSEN



DEAD OR ALIVE 2



BISHI BASHI



RAYMAN 2



TEAM BUDDIES

80 KESSEN

Command great armies on an epic scale in an ancient period of Japanese history where honor meant everything and generals wore silly hats. Witness hundreds of soldiers battle simultaneously, and marvel at the complexity and subtlety of warfare on the medieval battlefield. One of the first and best yet for the PlayStation 2.

81 DEAD OR ALIVE 2

This looked great in the arcade, with arenas that could take damage, silky smooth textures and an innovative combination of grappling and tag team combat. This is more or less a direct port to the PlayStation 2, but what a port! Marvel at silky smooth skin, lavish detail and of course the bounciest bosoms in the business.

82 BISHI BASHI SPECIAL

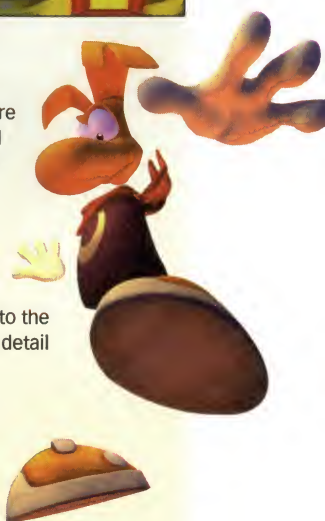
This is the zaniest collection of mini games ever to come out of Japan. Add 46 surreal challenges to a handful of sugar charged contestants, and this is a recipe for one strange party.

83 RAYMAN 2

Rayman was one of the first great games on the PlayStation, and now after all these years he's moved on to 3D, in a platforming adventure of unprecedented quality. Even though this is an early look at *Rayman 2*, the graphics engine is rock solid and French charm is already oozing from every pore. This could be the best game of the year.

84 TEAM BUDDIES

If there's one thing missing from the PlayStation, it's simple, honest-to-God top-down multiplayer combat mayhem. *Team Buddies* supplies this and more, with ground breaking artificial intelligence, and some of the most innocent looking characters perpetrating the most heinous atrocities against each other.





Dead Or Alive 2

World's greatest fighting game? Or Kevin's ultimate panty fetish?

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Tecmo
- Developer
Tecmo
- Genre
Fighting
- Release Date
TBA
- Players
One to four

PROGRESS REPORT

- Positive Points**
- ♣ Top notch port of the arcade game.
 - ♣ Brand new levels, costumes, and extra features.
- Negative Points**
- ♣ Arcade stick is definitely a necessity.
 - ♣ We can't find the nude code.



The counters and throws look so realistic

Dead Or Alive, originally released in 1996, was technically one of the best 3D fighting games next to Virtua Fighter and Tobal 2. Nevermind its reputation for female characters with large, bouncing breasts - this game had all the mechanics and fighting styles of the world down pat.

And where games like Virtua Fighter, Tekken, and numerous 2D fighters were still struggling with coming up with a workable countering system, Dead Or Alive came up with one that was close to perfect. After four years, Tecmo have finally produced their long awaited sequel to the game, *Dead Or Alive 2*, and it's coming to PlayStation 2.

Dead Or Alive 2 has been winning the praises of critics across the board for several reasons. Firstly, the graphics have undergone a massive update, featuring characters that look and move so gracefully, you would swear that you were watching the real thing. The specific fighting styles like Tai Chi and Jeet Kun Do are also so realistically emulated that once you take control of them, movies like *Fong Sai Yuk* become a distant memory.

FANTASTIC LEVELS

The level designs are also fantastically innovative, now featuring multi-tiered arenas with different rooms and areas to fight in. In one level, for instance, you are fighting next to a Chinese village by



Dead Or Alive 2 is filled with cut-scenes using in-game graphics, and they look as good as FMV!



Check out Tina's awesome thigh-flip throw



Hey... this game's for kids, right?

a stream. A swift kick will send your opponent stumbling over the edge of the nearby waterfall, in which instance you jump down pursuit and continue beating seven shades out of your opponent in a completely new area! The standard rings of Virtua Fighter and the rotating background of Tekken now look quite primitive by comparison.

Originally programmed on Sega's Naomi arcade hardware and released in arcade-perfect form for the Sega Dreamcast, *Dead Or Alive 2* on the PlayStation 2 originally started out as a direct port of the Dreamcast game.

PUSHING A LITTLE HARDER

The final product, however, will offer a great deal more. Utilising the new capabilities offered by Sony's new super-console, the PlayStation 2 version of *Dead Or Alive 2* will feature 1.5 million polygons more than what the Dreamcast hardware is capable of putting out, as well as putting the PS2's superior lighting effects to good use.

SKIN-TIGHT CAT SUIT, ANYONE?

In addition, the PlayStation 2 version of *Dead Or Alive 2* will also feature some extra costumes, some extra levels to play on, as well as some completely new sections to certain levels previously unseen.

In some levels you can smash your opponent through a stained glass window, and you will also be able to smash them through a wall to reveal a completely new area. The obvious benefits of these additions are that the game is substantially deeper and more rewarding.

What we've played of the game so far is nothing short of spectacular. The game has a team battle mode, a brilliant tag team mode, a 4-player simultaneous mode not featured on the Dreamcast version; and of course, even though they are still computer generated, it features some of the hottest digital babes that will cause even the most ardent of fans to look and see. A full review next month.

Kevin Cheung



Kessen

Hundreds of samurai do epic battle in gory detail



FACT FILE

■ Publisher

Koei

■ Developer

Koei

■ Genre

Strategy/War Sim

■ Release Date

TBA

■ Players

One

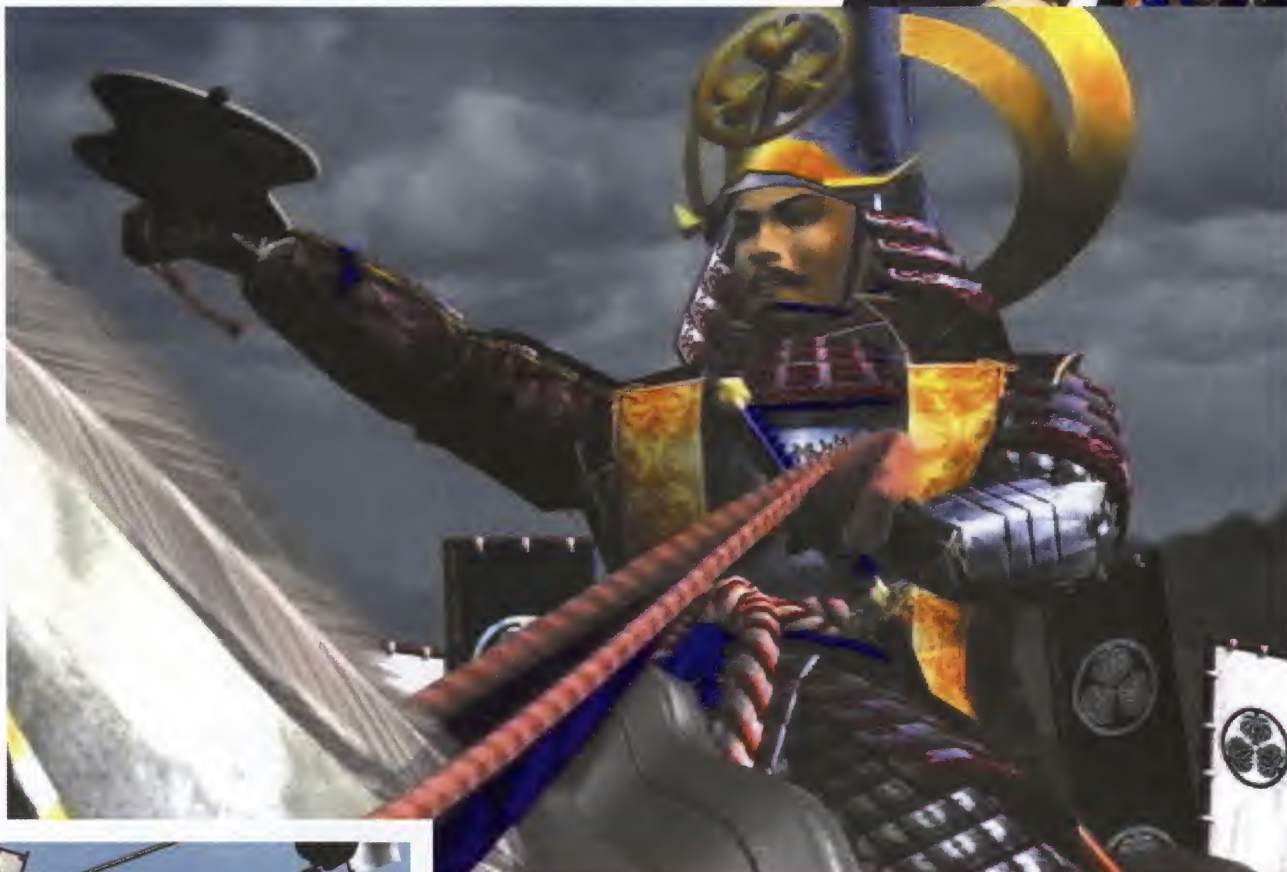
PROGRESS REPORT

Positive Points

- ♣ So many in game characters...
- ♣ Fully orchestrated musical score.

Negative Points

- ♣ A very slow-moving game.
- ♣ Fiddly interface.



"I hereby declare that I possess the freakiest head-piece in the land"

rendered and real-time graphics, shows a choreographed attack where hundreds upon hundreds of individual armed soldiers swarm across the battlefield, charging into each other with their swords and spears. What's striking about this sequence is that every character's animations are seemingly unique, meaning that they don't all look as though they're running on some automated sequence.

A TRADITIONAL STRATEGY GAME

However, when you come to the substantive gameplay, *Kessen* is essentially a strict strategy game at heart. You will be presented with the battlefield, the objectives, the armies at your command, and it's up to you to determine how best to win the day.

With the default viewpoint set at a bird's eye view, your job is to determine where best to strike and when. Battalions can be sent to meet the vulnerable targets, or they can be sent in to support another battalion in battle. Sometimes, they take part from afar by firing cannons, arrows, or rifles from a distance. As each battle unfolds, the simple press of a button zooms in to see the action in the flesh.

And in the flesh it is. From this viewpoint, you can see the ground littered with dead



"I bet I can shoot his hat off from here"



The sheer number of characters being rendered onscreen in amazing

War simulations based on historical events are a very popular genre in the Japanese and broader Asian market, much like the *Command and Conquer* and *Warcraft* games in our own market.

Koei, whose fame in the Japanese market can be credited in part to their strong war simulation titles, is the first to release such a title for the PlayStation 2. Titled *Kessen* (meaning "the deciding battle"), this game recreates the Japanese uprising against the Tokugawa government in the early 1600s. At first glance, *Kessen* will blow you away. The opening FMV, using a combination of pre-

bodies, horses, and weapons. With so many characters being rendered simultaneously, it's amazing that everything from the environments to the characters look so realistic.

At this stage, we are not prepared to review *Kessen* until we get deeper into it, as the game is incredibly deep and it's bogging us down in translation agony. Whilst the likelihood of a Feudal Japanese war simulation coming out in our local market is next to nil, it could easily be inspiration for a more Western approach to the game. Have at you! Bring on Defender of the Crown!

Kevin Cheung

Bishi Bashi Special

More zany Japanese party games than you can shake a stick at!

FACT FILE

- Publisher
GT Interactive
- Developer
Konami
- Genre
Party game
- Release Date
May
- Players
One to three

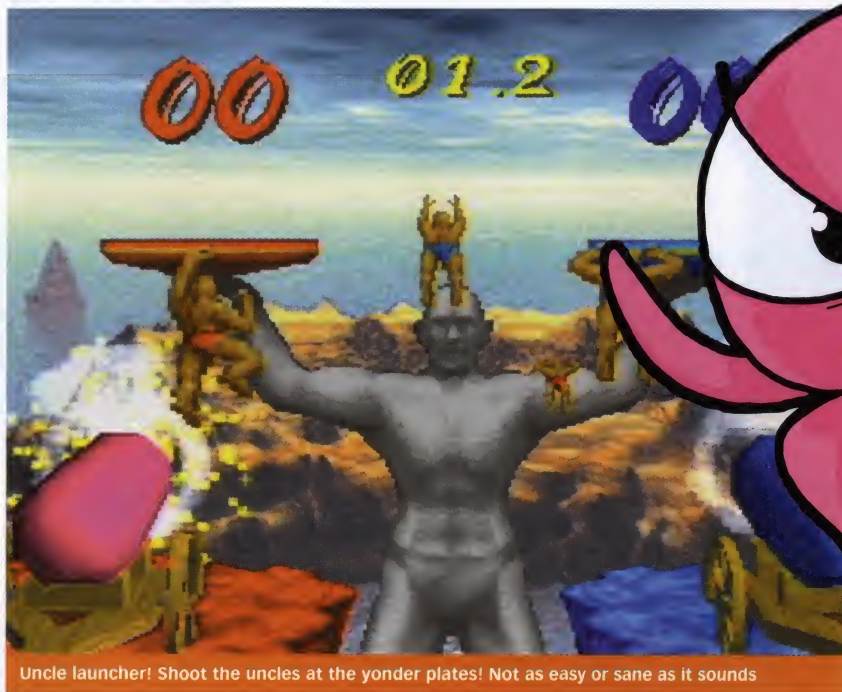
PROGRESS REPORT

Positive Points

- ♣ Stacks of variety.
- ♣ Compulsive, crazy party fun.

Negative Points

- ♣ A little shallow.
- ♣ Holds little value as a single player experience.



Uncle launcher! Shoot the uncles at the yonder plates! Not as easy or sane as it sounds



Bishi Bashi Special is Konami's latest effort to corner the market for games which are made up of a zillion mini games. There are others in its class, like *International Track and Field 2* which confines its action to the reproduction of "real" sporting events, and *Point Blank 2* which requires the added expense of light guns for maximal enjoyment.

But *Bishi Bashi* stands apart, as it has no pretensions regarding appearance or hardware. Instead it bursts at the seams with honest-to-goodness Japanese A-grade bizarre stuff, and uses the simplest possible visual language to relay fun into the gamer's brain. *Bishi Bashi* is the archetypal party game. It provides variety, zany antics, and succinct, fast paced fun.

MEGA AMAZING PARTY FUN ACTION!!!

The flavour of Japanese childrens' game that's delivered by this title is communicated immediately: For game modes you have a choice between "Super Bishi Bashi" and "Hyper Bishi Bashi." All the colours are friendly pastels, all the sounds are cheesy, hyped up musak. To approach the game with a beard-stroking attitude that's even remotely intellectual would be a big mistake.

A lot of imagination has gone into the design of the platoon of mini games at the players' disposal. Some are self explanatory, like "It's Raining



Shark Jumper! Jump the sharks, or DIE!



Amidar lives! Sort of...

Coins!!", "Building Climber", "Mega Speed Race!!" and "Type In Letters!!" But amongst the cornucopia of gaming options available are some more obtuse, bizarre tasks, like "Uncle Launcher", "Mechanical Pencil Basher", "Jump For The Meat!!", "Oh NO! It's Gonna Explode!!" and "Monster Catastrophe."

Preceding each round is a concise instruction sequence to familiarise the players with the controls, essential for beginners and skippable for experts. The mini games can be played with either one, two or three players. There is a tournament structure in place so that extended conflicts can spread their bouts over as many of the challenges as desired. Challengers can interject at any time, which is just as well as multiplayer is the only real option for getting the most out of the game.

BETTER THAN RETRO?

It's interesting to compare *Bishi Bashi* to the various retro collections on the market. These packages also provide simple mini games, but

ones formulated back when they pushed the limits of the available arcade hardware. They radiate a stale air of authority, which is ill suited to their station as re-animated stocking stuffer. *Bishi Bashi* has no such pretensions, instead radiating pure, psychotic friendliness.

Not to mention variety. Your typical retro collection will have half a dozen games. *Bishi Bashi* has 46. Sheer weight of numbers ensures that there's something for everybody, and there's enough variety to warrant cycling through them for hours.

You can see homages to many an arcade classic in here, there are visible traces of Amidar, Frogger, Burger Time and more, and rather than just bringing their shambling corpses back to life, their souls have been reborn into crazy happy Japanese party action. In the party game stakes, *Bishi Bashi* is sizing up to be a magic pudding full of limitless gaming goodness to keep all the good children warm this winter.

James Cottee



Rayman 2

Meet the new king of platformers. Did we mention he's French?

FACT FILE

■ Publisher
Ubi Soft

■ Developer
Ubi Soft

■ Genre
Platformer

■ Release Date
September

■ Players
One

PROGRESS REPORT

Positive Points

♣ Rock solid graphics engine. This puts everything else to shame.

Negative Points

♣ In a genre so heavily populated, it'll have to be very distinctive.



Swim underwater in cavernous levels!



Face baffling puzzles on an epic scale!



Wonder just what the hell is going on!

While the PlayStation public at large is probably more attuned to the name "Crash Bandicoot", the fans of platform games would not be quite as aware of the popularity of a game like Rayman. "Yeah, sure, I've heard of it, but it's not that big a deal, is it?", you might be asking. Well, it is.

Rayman just happens to be the biggest selling 3rd party platform game on the PlayStation, outperforming the competition with its unique sense of humour and style. *Rayman 2*, the sequel, is now headed to the PlayStation, and it looks like Ubi Soft are on to a real winner again.



Rayman gauges the reactions of his friends to the news he's bought a Dreamcast

IT'S GOOD TO BE THE KING

No doubt many of you will know that *Rayman 2* has already been released on other platforms: first on the Nintendo 64, and then on the Sega Dreamcast only 2 months ago. On the Nintendo 64, I uttered not a peep about blurry textures or over-filtering, and I was genuinely amazed by how well it was done.

On the Dreamcast, it featured high-res textures and higher polygon counts, and I was bowled over again. And what of the PlayStation version? Well... we honestly can't expect something quite as fantastic on 5 year old technology now, can we? Wrong. What we've seen so far of *Rayman 2* on the PlayStation was unexpectedly impressive. Sure, it doesn't boast the kind of hardware effects of a Dreamcast, but it is executed to such a high standard that it is up there with the PlayStation's platforming elite - such as *Medievil 2* and *Syphon Filter 2*.

In terms of design and gameplay, *Rayman 2* is essentially a 3D action platform game. The character you play has no arms or legs (we

have given up cracking silly jokes about him), and his mission is to help save a bunch of gerbil-like creatures that have been locked up on a series of fantasy levels.

The level designs are breathtaking, taking a page out of some of the best Bluth designs that are reminiscent of scenes from *Dragon's Lair* and *The Secret of Nymh*. The opening stages put you in an enchanting forest setting, complete with unnecessary but nevertheless gorgeous little environmental details, from texture maps of tree branches against the wall and fireflies buzzing through the air, to the incredible ripple-over effect in the water.

At this stage in development, I can express nothing but surprise at how much Ubi Soft are getting out of the PlayStation hardware on this game. Smooth frame rate, smooth scrolling and camera controls... technically and aesthetically, *Rayman 2* will be an incredible game. By September, *Rayman 2* will undoubtedly be 'the' platform game to get for your PlayStation.

Kevin Cheung

Team Buddies

Now your daily dose of action comes in capsule form

FACT FILE

- Publisher
Sony
- Developer
Psygnosis
- Genre
Multiplayer RTS
- Release Date
July
- Players
One to four

PROGRESS REPORT

Positive Points

- ♣ A rather refreshing, colourful take on beer-and-pretzels gaming.
- ♣ Revolutionary artificial intelligence for both human and computer players.

Negative Points

- ♣ Four player split screen games are traditionally good purveyors of itsey-bitsey-eyestrain-o-vision - yeah!



Aren't they the cutest little bastards?

While there have been many new genres pioneered on the PlayStation, and then flogged to within an inch of their lives by near-identical sequels, there have been a few areas of game design that have been utterly neglected by developers constantly striving to have the Next Big Thing.

In their constant bidding for more polygons, better textures and higher resolution, the simplistic, primal urges within us all for pure mayhem have all too often gone unsated.

This frightful state of affairs is being set straight by Psygnosis and their new game *Team Buddies*. The emphasis is on rapid deployment of your identical soldiers, or buddies, in an iconic yet diverse tactical environment ripe for endless plunder at the hands of gamers who want their gratification instant.

The game field is like something from a Lego designer's fantasy. Real world environments are translated into a rolling plastic countryside of

squares, but this is hardly out of place



Stack crates to collect weapons. Under no circumstances ask what the programmers were on...

compared to your men. The buddies you control are like giant paracetamol capsules, inflatable soldiers in a battle only given meaning by you and your friends' desire for action.

HOW YA DOIN', BUDDY?

Each player, either human or computer, controls a team of buddies. You can cycle through your squad, controlling the one you deem closest to the thick of things. Your buddies can acquire weapons, or even vehicles, such as tanks or stealth fighters.

They can have specialised skills, such as in karate or medicine, and their fortunes lie in how efficiently you can smash open the cargo crates that litter the map, for these are the source of your equipment and personnel. It's a mixture of strategy and insanity as you must rapidly build up a force to crush your opponents' bases. Rounding out the game environment are wandering creatures who can hinder or help you as they see fit.

This cartoonish setting is brought alive by not only the malevolence of the human players, but the advanced AI software controlling the

computer buddies. Psygnosis brought in an Artificial Intelligence specialist to implement a cutting edge technology called Augmented Transition Networks.

IT'S CALLED ARTIFICIAL INCOMPETENCE

This technique simulates both the motivation and short term memory of the game characters. They are aware of their environment, and form elaborate plans to meet their goals.

They can communicate with each other, and based on their view of the world come up with plans to handle any situation. The behavior of computer controlled buddies is alarmingly human, as the constantly shifting game environment makes their behavior utterly unpredictable.

THE COMPUTER IS YOUR FRIEND

This benefit is also extended to the player, as the buddies you are not controlling at any given time are constantly thinking for themselves, following your orders to the best of their abilities and helping you at every turn. This is matched by the computer controlled teams launching ambushes and assassinations with ruthless efficiency occasionally punctuated by human fallibility.

Team Buddies is at once a comic and friendly diversion and the most realistic simulation of war yet seen on the PlayStation. It's penciled in for release in a couple of months, and will create some real competition for party game titans like *Worms Armageddon* and *Crash Team Racing*. It looks absolutely mental, and we're waiting with baited breath.

James Cottee



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**NAME:**

Lara Croft

CRIME:

Convincing the entire world that PlayStation gaming is little more than a hormone-drenched teenager's wet dream. Also, by diverting public attention to her most visible assets, she has distracted attention from the dearth of imagination shown in designing Tomb Raider II thru IV.

**NAME:**

Dead Or Alive girls

CRIME:

Perverting recent breakthroughs in physics modeling in video games by using these new techniques to make their breasts bounce up and down with almost disturbing force. DOA was an innovative fighting game, but everyone was attracted by macabre curiosity, not by its merits.

THE PLAYSTATION'S BIGGEST SEX SCANDALS

The PlayStation has changed a lot about the way we think about video gaming over the past five years. We are now accustomed to three dimensional graphics, CD quality sound and full motion video sequences that are on a par with Hollywood cinematics. But while the technology of gaming has surged forward in leaps and bounds, society's moral values have struggled to keep pace.

When a virtual woman on screen can strut, pose, wink and pout, why do real men find this attractive? The television screen is the retina of the mind's eye, and the interactive possibilities of sexuality in gaming have been largely ignored thus far. For while it can't hurt us, the specter of elicited games can stir the collective consciousness into an anti-gaming stance, and that can't be good for anyone.

NAME:

Nina Williams

CRIME:

Bringing BDSM imagery to the fore in Tekken 3. Nina's fighting moves are a misogynist's nightmare, with her groin-kicking and heel-stabbing she's made many a male gamer wince in agony as she whips the men (and women!) of the Tekken games to within an inch of their lives!



WHAT IS THE OFLC?

The Office of Film and Literature Classification is responsible for assigning classification ratings for every video game that's released in the country. A game can't be sold legally unless it has been assessed according to the rigorous standards laid down by the National Classification Code and the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995. These are not mere guidelines, but enforceable laws, and a game deemed unsuitable due to its content can be refused classification.

When a game is refused classification, it's a nice way of saying it's been banned. While this may be in the interests of the community, there are two sticking points that older gamers have with the status quo.

Firstly, because games are interactive, as opposed to the passive entertainment of movies, it has been assumed that they have a greater psychological effect on the player. Accordingly, there is no such thing as an R or an X rating for video games, it only goes up to MA. Often the intensity of games has been toned down to make them safe for 15 years olds, but this has only left gamers aged 18+ hungry for more.

Secondly, the nature of classification is, for the better part, subjective. That is, there's no scientific way to determine the difference between G and G8+, or M and MA. While it may be possible to define simulated sexual acts between consenting adults, how can you quantify if a game is going to provoke ethnic, racial or religious hatred? There's no room for a sense of humour, and there is as yet no legal recourse for the sale of interactive pornography.

So while Lara could conceivably get her kit off and score a MA rating, we are not going to see her get it on any time soon.



Sit back, relax, and ogle at the future

The most obvious manifestation of this trend towards sexual exhibitionism in gaming has been the Tomb Raider debacle. While the game series itself spiraled down into a bottomless pit of unoriginality, there was a procession of real-life models hired to appear as Lara Croft at media events.

Once her duties to Eidos were discharged, one of these damsels chose to denigrate herself and the mantle of Lara by appearing naked in Playboy magazine.

This was a shock that the gaming public had never had to face before. Abstract, pure icons of gaming were now vulnerable to debasement in the gutter press. Like a royal, or a billionaire's trophy wife, or even (God forbid) a Daddo, any video game character realistic enough to have a human parade in public in their name was now subject to human foibles and the unmistakable stench of mortality.

So too with Dead Or Alive, more commonly referred to as *"That Game Where The Chicks' Breasts Bounce A Lot."* It was inevitable that as the technology behind motion capture, skeletal modeling and game physics in general advanced that all this processing power would be diverted to the parts of a game character's body which keep moving once the rest of them has stopped.

While on paper this may seem like a logical extension of the ultimate pursuit of realism, all game rules are tweaked from the baseline of normality to maximise the gamer's pleasure, and in this case it took the form of ludicrous cartoon orbs that swung at the slightest nudge, as though mounted on springs.

While the majority of video game players are male, the proportion of female gamers is increasing, and aside from the odd Barbie puzzle game there have been some serious moves made to grab the attention of the gaming grrrl. The most obvious of these are on the sex appeal front, such as Jin Kazama from Tekken 3 and his titanic, nipple-less pectoral muscles. So too Tony Hawk Skateboarding has provoked many a young lass to exclaim - "Ooooooooh, Tony Hawk!"

But there have been many more subtle and emotional ploys made to the female gamers out there as well, such as the soap opera antics in the Final Fantasy games. It's an open secret that Squall Leonhart's features were modeled on Leonardo DiCaprio, and that Rinoa was a facsimile of Faye Wong. Through moulds of celebrity beauty, Squaresoft are masters of creating emotional attachment to game characters.

Whether it be through visual or mental stimulus, the trend is to make human players attracted to the characters in their games. As the average age of the gaming public increases, the content of games is becoming, on average, more mature.



Like showroom dummies come to life...

Adults who grew up on games now demand more sophisticated entertainment that reflects the freedom they now possess as full members of society.

If this trend can be summed up in a single change, it would be the replacement of the old Ridge Racer girl. Reiko Nagase was a wholesome, innocent looking girl-next-door who followed the series through to RR4. But for the PlayStation 2 she was replaced with Ai Fuakami, a more worldly looking number.

Physically imperfect, scandalously dressed, and almost anorexic-looking, Ai looks like a flag girl who actually would hang around race tracks, powerful cars and the men who drive them. What's more, her name, Ai, is Japanese for love.





The publicity material for Lara Croft threw in every bit of sexual innuendo in the book

MODELED ON REALITY

Convergence is the buzzword of the hour. Entertainment has sprung from a position where it was refining established formulae in narrow fields to one where different mediums are coupling clumsily in the dark.

Their offspring have yet to birth, but we can already see new hybrids gestating, and they all point in the direction of increased physical interaction with the machine.

The technology already exists for "Face Mapping" humans into games.

The PC community has been creating all manner of bizarre online avatars for themselves for years.

Appearing as anything from Sailor Moon to a sheep, the only limitations to

ones virtual form lie in the number of polygons at ones disposal and the mechanics of the games, which are typically restricted to first person shooters.

There are an increasing number of online gaming worlds of increasing size



Simple harmonic motion: science or sin?

and complexity, virtual environments which allow the players within to assume a different name, visage, or even gender. Services like Everquest and Ultima Online cater to compulsives, the kind of person that also falls foul of gambling and drug abuse.

While they're mastering the protocols of an online environment, their real world skills are atrophying, and as such these pastimes could either be viewed as the next stage in the evolution of society, or the herald of its doom.

It's like the plot from Blade Runner, only 19 years early. Computer programs are becoming so attractive that you can fall in love with them, and humans themselves are defining themselves in terms of software.

If the persons in video games become more attractive than the ones in real life, what does this spell for the future of the species? If humans in the developed world, as a whole, begin to find virtual females more alluring than their biological counterparts, then who knows, cloning could become necessary to ensure the continuation of the species.

LONG LIVE NEW FLESH

The controversy is far from over. With the PlayStation 2 just around the corner, the dark satanic mills of mass hysteria will once more be set in motion. Indulging in histrionic ramblings under a flimsy umbrella of concern over the moral health of The Kids, the increased polygon power of the new machine will doubtless be labeled as a tool of the devil.

Modeling the rippling of sinew, the tanning of skin, the glistening of sweat beads on supple bodies more realistically curvaceous than ever before, the PS2 will attract more attention than anything we have ever seen. They won't need real life humans to tarnish the names of video game nymphs, for they will be as real as any adolescent fantasy.

These ghosts of physical perfection are the future. It will be our choice as to whether we define them or they define us.

WHAT EFFECT DOES THE MEDIA HAVE?

The media, as Oliver Stone once said, is like the weather. It wraps around the world, swirling in a never ending blitz of hype and hysteria, seeking out current events to hurl into our living rooms and to smear across our broadsheets. While it serves a valuable purpose in airing dirty laundry in the interests of democracy and freedom, it has a nasty habit of simplifying complex issues so they can fit into sound bites.

This can also work against freedom. Say a disgruntled worker goes to work one day with an AK 47 and murders everyone before turning the gun on himself. Then the police find he had a copy of Medal Of Honor on his PlayStation. The media would without fail jump on the fact, repeat it over and over again, and try to convince the world that first person shooters are a cause of mental illness.

And that's just violence. There are accepted norms regarding the boundaries of non-violent erotica in print and movies, but interactive entertainment is still a very gray area. Parents can get concerned by a game simulating "mature situations," like drinking or romance. The very thought of a game showing controllable characters getting busy would whip the media machine into a game-banning frenzy.

CURLY FROM WIPEOUT

While allegations may be thrown about regarding the tawdry personal lives of other PlayStation starlets, we know that Curly from WipeOut would never do anything to shock us. A pure icon of enthusiasm and love, Curly has a special place in our hearts.



HELPSTATION

MISS NURSE WANTS YOU!

Can't find the magic glowing rabbit to get past the third squid boss in the underwater city? Stuck in the boiler room of the old factory? Do you require some level skip codes and invincibility cheats to feel like a real PlayStation success? Write to Ms Nurse. She may just help you!



WRITE TO: MISS NURSE

Level 6, 418a Elizabeth St

Surry Hills NSW Australia 2010

Email: playstation@next.com.au

FEAR EFFECT

EXPERT MODE

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press Down (3), Δ, Down (3), □, Left, Right for more challenging opponents.

ALL WEAPONS

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O (2), Δ, □, Up, O.

INFINITE HEALTH

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O, O, Δ, □, Right, □.

INFINITE AMMUNITION

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O (2).

INSTANT PUZZLE SOLUTION

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O (2), Down (3), Up.

ONE HIT KILL WITH FIREARMS

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O (2), Δ, □, Down, R1.

ONE HIT KILL WITH SMACK-JACK, KNIFE, OR BRASS KNUCKLE

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O (2), Δ, □, Down, L1.

RAPID FIRE

Select "Credits" at the options screen then press L1, Δ, Up, Down, O (2), Up (3), Down.

FEAR EFFECT



NEED FOR SPEED 3:

To activate each of the following cheats, enter them on the user names screen under the options menu:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Xcntry | Unlock "AutoCross" hidden track |
| Xcav8 | Unlock "Caverns" hidden track |
| Mcityz | Unlock "Empire City" bonus track |
| Gldfsh | Unlock "Scorpio-7" hidden track |
| Mnbeam | Unlock "SpaceRace" hidden track |
| Playtm | Unlock "The Room" hidden track |
| rocket | Unlock El Nino car |
| 1jagx | Unlock Jaguar XJR-15 |
| amgmrc | Unlock Mercedes Benz CLK GTR |
| Seeall | Unlock More camera views |
| spoilt | Unlock all cars and all tracks except the hidden ones |

RAINBOW SIX

EXTRA AMMO

Pause the game, hold L1 and press □ (2), O, Δ, X, Δ, X, Δ. This may be done at the main menu.

RAINBOW 6



INVINCIBLE HOSTAGES

Pause, hold L1 then press: O, O, □, Δ, X, Δ, X, O.

MAKE THE TERRORISTS DISAPPEAR

Pause the game, then hold L1 and press Δ, O (2), Δ, □, X, Δ, O. **Note:** This may also be done at the main menu.

REVIVE HEALTH

Pause the game and hold L1 then press: Δ, Δ, X, O, O, X, □, □.

SHOW ALL MAPS

Pause the game and hold L1 then press: X, O, □, Δ, Δ, □, O, X.

SHOW THE ENDING

Pause the game and hold L1 then press: □, Δ, □, □, O, O, X, Δ.

UNLOCK ALL DOORS

Pause the game and hold L1 then press: Δ, □, □, Δ, X, O, □, Δ.

RAINBOW 6



HELPstation

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1



ROLLCAGE STAGE 2

GIVE ATD GHOST CARS

Enter the code **WLL.IF.IT.AINT.THEM.PESKY.KIDS** as your password.

GIVE DEMOLITION MODES

Enter the code **IS.IT.COLD.IN.HERE.OR.IS.IT.JUST.ME?** as your password.

GIVE MEGA SPEED

Enter the code **LOOK.OUT!.ITS.ANDY.GREEN** as your password.

GIVE MIRROR MODE

Enter **I.AM.THE.MIRROR.MAN, .000000000!** as your password.

GIVE PURSUIT MODE

Enter the code **PURSUIT,.A.SUIT.MADE.FROM.CATS** as your password.

GIVE RUBBLE SOCCER MODE

Enter the code **IM.OBVIOUSLY.SICK.AS.A.PARROT** as your password.

GIVE SURVIVOR MODE

Enter **HERE.TODAY,.GONE,.LATE.AFTERNOON** as your password.

GIVE ALL COMBAT TRACKS

Enter **YOU.HAVE.A.LOTA.EXPLODING.TO.DO** as your password.

GIVE ALL TRACKS

Enter **NOW.THAT'S.WHAT.I.CALL.RACING.147** as your password.

GIVE ALL CARS

Enter the code **WHEELS,.METAL,.ITS.....THE.BIN!** as your password.

GIVE EVERYTHING

Enter the code **I.WANT.IT.ALL.AND.I.WANT.IT.NOW!** as your password.

MAKES MASTERS VERY HARD

Enter **MASTERS.IS.AS.HARD.AS.NAILS.MON!** as your password.

STAR WARS EPISODE ONE: THE PHANTOM MENACE

DEBUG MODE

(LEVEL SELECT, INVINCIBILITY, ETC.)

To activate debug mode, highlight Options at the main menu. Then press: Δ , O, Left, L1, R2, \square , O, Left. (A tone confirms correct entry.)

Hold L1 + Select + Δ to reveal the debug list.

DRAW LIGHTSABER WHILE UNDERWATER OR CLIMBING

To bring out your lightsaber underwater or while dangling on a rope (when you normally could not) press start, highlight weapons and choose light saber. This helps when you know some guy is going to mess with you soon and you need a weapon.

TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION

ALL SECRET ITEMS

Face north on the compass. Highlight the large medipak and hold L1, L2, R1, R2. Press the down button, then Δ . You now have all the secret items for that stage.

ALL WEAPONS

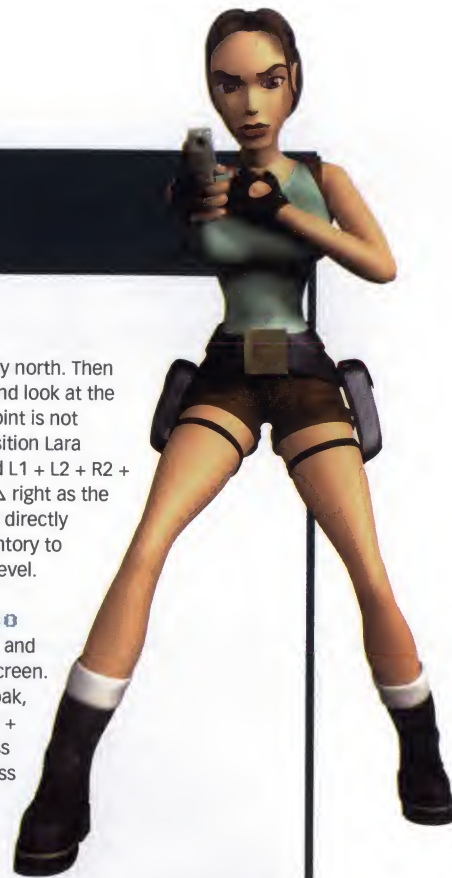
Have Lara face exactly north. Enter the inventory and go to the small medipak, and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + Up, the press Δ , right as the compass hand points north. Close the inventory screen, then reopen it to see all the weapons.

LEVEL SKIP

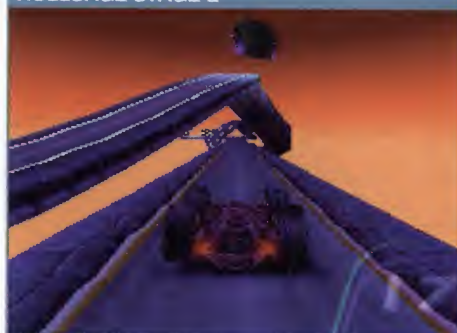
Have Lara face exactly north. Then enter the inventory and look at the compass if the red point is not blinking slightly reposition Lara again. Go to load hold L1 + L2 + R2 + R1 + Up, then press Δ right as the compass hands point directly north. Close the inventory to advance to the next level.

UNLIMITED AMMO

Have Lara face north, and enter the inventory screen. Go to the large medipak, and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + Down, then press Δ right as the compass hand points north. Close the inventory screen and reopen it. All weapons should now show "Unlimited Ammo".



ROLLCAGE STAGE 2



ROLLCAGE STAGE 2



HELPSTATION

TONY HAWK



TONY HAWK

10X MULTIPLIER

Pause game. Then hold L1 and press □, △, Up, Down to have 10 points in all stats for the current skater. (A shaking screen confirms correct entry.)

13X MULTIPLIER

Pause game. Then hold L1 and press ×, □ (x2), △, Up, Down to have 13 points in all stats for the current skater. (A shaking screen confirms correct entry.)

ALIEN ENCOUNTER

Go to Rosewell, New Mexico. There will be three doors. In one of the three doors, there will be an alien holding cell. In the holding cell, there will be an alien saying, "HELP ME!".

BIG HEAD MODE

Pause game. Then hold L1 and press □, ○, Up, Left, Left. A shaking screen confirms correct entry. Quit current game and begin a new one to activate cheat.

CONTINUOUS GRIND

For a longer grind, balance yourself out pressing left or right. For example if your skater is leaning to the left hold the right button until you balance yourself.

THE LEVEL SELECT

Pause game. Hold L1 and press △, Right, Up, □, △, Left, Up, □, △. (A shaking screen confirms correct entry.)

PLAY AS KAREEM CAMPBELL ON THE DEMO VERSION

Start a one player game and go to Jamie Thomas, try to select him and push △. Go to a two player game and player one should be Kareem Campbell. He can't do any special moves and the game locks up a lot.

PLAY AS OFFICER DICK

With a single character, collect all of the 30 tapes in Career mode.

SIGNATURE MOVES

Signature moves are performed when the Special bar flashes yellow.

PRIVATE CARRERA

Somi spin Left, Down, ○
Well hardflip Right, Left, □
Ho-Ho-Ho Left, Up, □ + ○

ANDREW RENOLDS

Backflip Up, Down + ○
Heelflip to Bluntside Down, Down + △
Triple Kickflip Left, Left + □

BOB BURNQUIST

Backflip Up, Down + ○
One-footed Smith Right, Right + △

BUCKY LASEK

Fingerflip Airwalk Left, Right + ○
Kickflip McTwist Right, Right + ○
Varial Heelflip Judo Down, Up + □

CHAD MUSKA

360 Shove-it Rewind Right, Right + □
Frontflip Down, Up + ○
One-foot 5-0 Thumpin Right, Down + △

ELISSA STREAMER

Backflip Up, Down + ○
Primo Grind Left, Left + △

GEOFF ROWLEY

Backflip Up, Down + ○
Darkside Grind Left, Right + △
Double Hardflip Right, Down + □

JAMIE THOMAS

540 Flip Left, Down + □
Frontflip Down, Up + ○
One-footed Nose Grind Up, Up + △

KAREEM CAMPBELL

Casper Slide Up, Down + △
Front Flip Down, Up + ○
Kickflip Underflip Left, Right + □

OFFICER DICK

Assume the Position Left, Left + ○
Neckbreak Grind Left, Right + △
Yeeehaw Front Fip Down, Up + ○

RUNE GLIFBERG

Christ Air Left, Right + ○
Front Back Kickflip Up, Down + □
Kickflip McTwist Right, Right + ○

TONY HAWK

900 * Right, Down + ○
540 Board Varial ** Left, Left + □
360 Flip to Mute Down, Right + □
Kickflip McTwist Right, Right + ○

* Maneuver requires a lot of air.

** Half-pipe and street courses only.



HELPstation

TONY HAWK



SLOW MOTION

Pause game. Then hold L1 and press □, Left, Up, □, Left. A shaking screen will confirm correct entry.

UNLIMITED SPECIALS

Pause game. Hold L1 and press X, Δ, O, Down, Up, Right. A shaking screen will confirm correct entry.

UNLOCK EVERYTHING

Pause the game, then hold L1 and press O, Right, Up, Down, O, Right, Up, □, Δ. If the code was entered correctly, the screen would shake. The all levels, Fmv sequences, tapes, and people will be available.

TONY HAWK



START FROM

RANDOM

LOCATIONS

Pause game. Then hold L1 and press □, O, X, Up, Down. A shaking screen will confirm correct entry.

PLAY AS PRIVATE CARRERA

To get Private Carrera you must unlock everything else (or enter "unlock most everything" code). Press start during gameplay and hold L1. Press Δ, Up, Δ, Up, O, Up, Left, Δ (the screen WILL NOT shake like it

TONY HAWK



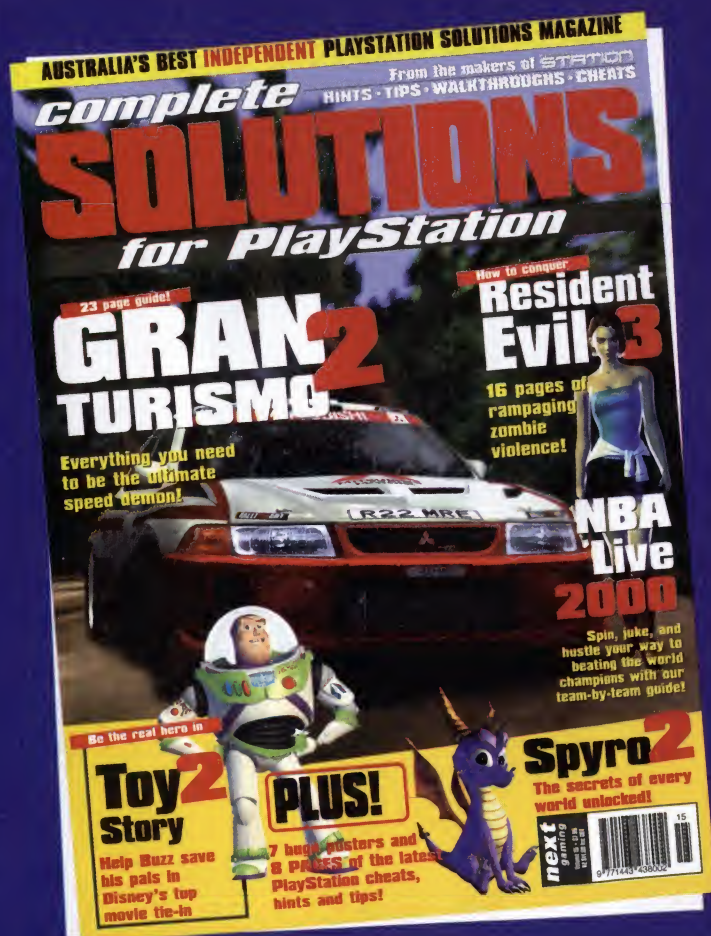
does with other codes.) Restart and at the character selection screen you will find Private Carrera in place of Officer Dick.

SKATER'S FMV SEQUENCE

To watch a skater's video clip, win a gold medal in all three competitive events with that skater.

"NEVERSOFT BAILS" FMV SEQUENCE

To watch a clip of the developers skating, win a gold medal in all three of the competitive events with Officer Dick.



On Sale Now

Australia's **BEST INDEPENDENT** PlayStation Solutions Magazine

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH X

The unveiling of the PlayStation 2 has made gamers everywhere drool in anticipation, yet not everyone is so happy about the PS2. When the world saw the new console, there was one person who was left out. Speaking from his home in New York, we talk to X, formerly of PSX.

Australian Station: Hi there X, I guess you must be feeling pretty low at the moment. Could you tell us how you found out that you had been dumped?

X: I guess I found out like everyone else, I just logged onto the Net and saw the first pictures of the new Playstation. And there it was, on the side in big blue writing, PS2. Not an X to be seen anywhere.

AST: Did you have an inkling you were to be dumped?

X: Not really. Back in 95 I had a big scare when Sony shortened the name to Playstation, but to their credit, they tolerated the name PSX. They never tried to stop people referring to the PSX name, and their decision enabled me to have a career for the past 4 or so years.

AST: But the confusion that many people had over the name PSX couldn't have helped you.

X: Right. You don't know how many times people came up to me and asked what I stood for in PSX. It's rather depressing to continually admit that you were just a discarded codename that the general public kept using. When people ask me nowadays, I just tell them that it stands for Experience.

AST: Have you heard from Sony at all?

X: I tried calling them the other week, but they didn't want to take my call. That's the thing that hurts the most, I have given them the best years of my life, and now they just discard me. I really thought I deserved better than that, I certainly deserved an explanation.

AST: Have you had much support from the public?

X: The public has been great, some people are referring to the new Playstation as the PSX2, but deep down I know it won't last. Once people see that big PS2 on the side of the box, who's going to remember me? I actually heard that someone's even made a "Keep X in the PSX" webpage, which shows how much people care.

AST: What's next for you then?

X: Well I'm going to be in Australia early next year as the 3rd X in a XXXX commercial. I don't like to promote drinking because of my family image, but you have to pay the bills. Beyond that you have the X-Men movie coming up, I'm hoping I'll get the job in the title, but there's a lot of competition out there. Luckily I have a good agent. A big blow came with the news that The X-Files may not be around much longer; that was the obvious next move for me.

AST: You aren't tempted to stay in the videogame world are you?

X: Oh sure, I'd love to. I'm still searching for info on the Microsoft X-Box, but that's still too far away to make any real plans. I've got a couple of friends at Nintendo though, and I hear a couple of whispers that the word Extreme may be used pretty soon.

AST: Well, we would just like to thank you for all of your service towards the Playstation over the years, and best of luck in your future projects.

X: Thanks a lot for your time, and keep on gaming!
Dan Steadman



PLAYSTATION

10 Asteroids
 11 Auto Destruct
 12 Azure Dreams
 13 B Movie
 14 Battle Arena Tosh 3
 15 Battle Arena Tosh 2
 16 Beast Wars
 17 Bio Freaks
 18 Blast Clamher
 19 Blast Radius
 20 Blastro
 21 Blood Omen
 22 Bloody Roar
 23 Bomberman World
 24 Brain Dead 13
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 73 Formula 1 97
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 75 Formula Karts
 76 Forsaken
 77 Frenzy
 78 Future Cop LAPD
 79 G Darius
 80 G Police
 81 Gex: Enter the Gecko
 82 Ghost in the Shell
 83 Gran Turismo
 84 Grand Tour Racing
 85 Guilty Gear
 86 Heart of Darkness
 87 Hot Shots Gold
 88 L.S. Soccer Pro 98
 89 Independence Day
 90 Indy 500
 91 J. McGrath Super x 98
 92 Judge Dredd
 93 K-1 Arena Fighters
 94 Karero Deception
 95 Klona
 96 Knockout Kings

97 Krazy Ivan
 98 Kula World
 99 Libero Grande
 100 M.K. 4
 101 M.K. Mythologies
 102 M.K. Trilogies
 103 Madden NFL 99
 104 Madden NFL 98
 105 Mass Destruction
 106 Max Force
 107 MDK
 108 Medevil
 109 Megaman Legends
 110 Marvel Vs Street Fighter
 111 Metal Gear Solid
 112 Metal Slug
 113 Micro Machines V3
 114 Monster Trucks
 115 Moto Racer
 116 Moto Racer 2
 117 Moterhead
 118 N20 - Nitrous Oxide
 119 Nascar 98
 120 NBA Live 98
 121 NBA Live 99
 122 NBA Shoot Out 98
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 124 Need for Speed 3
 125 NFL Blitz
 126 NFL Gameday
 127 NHL 98
 128 NHL 99
 129 NHL Face Off 98
 130 NHL Powerplay
 131 Ninja: Shadows
 132 Nuclear Strike
 133 O.D.T.
 134 Oddworld: Abe's Exodus
 135 Oddworld: Abe's Odd
 136 One
 137 Pandemonium
 138 Pandemonium 2
 139 Parasite Eve
 140 Parappa the Rapper
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 159 Shane Warne Cricket
 160 Side Pocket
 161 Sim City 2000
 162 Skull Monkeys
 163 Small Soldiers
 164 Smash Court 2
 165 Soul Blade
 166 Soviet Strike
 167 Spice World
 168 Spyro the Dragon
 169 Star Wars: Master of Ter.
 170 Steel Rain
 171 Street Fighter Alpha 3
 172 Street Fighter Coll 2
 173 Street Fighter X+Alpha
 174 Street Racer
 175 Tekken 2
 176 Tekken 3
 177 Ten Pin Alley
 178 Technu
 179 Test Drive 4
 180 Test Drive 5
 181 Test Drive Off Road
 182 Test Drive Off Road 2
 183 Tetris Plus

184 The Fifth Element
 185 The Lost World
 186 The Unholy War
 187 Theme Hospital
 188 Theme Park
 189 Thrill Kill
 190 Thunder Force 5
 191 Tiger Woods 99
 192 Time Crisis
 193 Tobal 2
 194 Toca Touring Car
 195 Toca Touring Car 2
 196 Tokyo Highway Battle
 197 Tomb Raider
 198 Tomb Raider 2
 199 Tomb Raider 3
 200 Tomba
 201 T.Makinen World Rally
 202 Treasures of the Deep
 203 Triple Play 98
 204 Triple Play 99
 205 Twisted Metal 2
 206 Twisted Metal 3
 207 V-Rally
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DREAMCAST

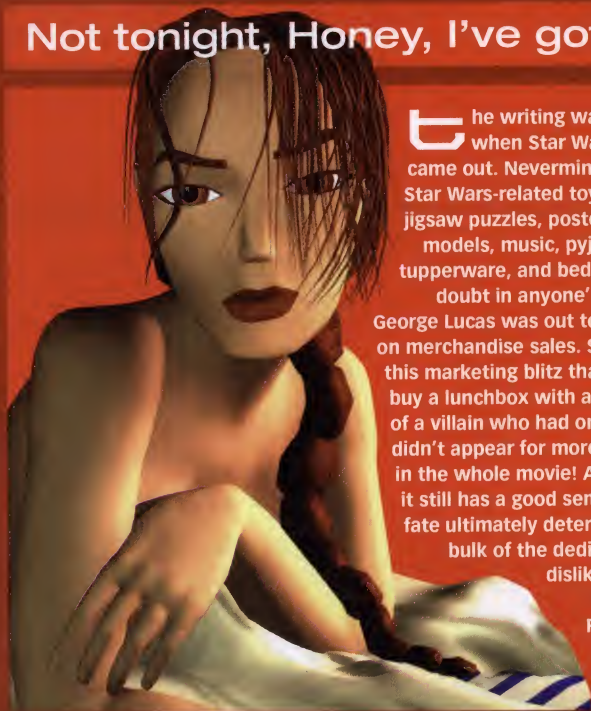
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the CRITICS' CIRCLE

This is where the crew at Australian Station takes a more serious look at the world of PlayStation. The Critic's Circle is a forum where we discuss hot and/or topical issues that affect your enjoyment in PlayStation gaming. This month, we ask the question that gamers around the world have begun asking: **Is it time for Tomb Raider to die?**

Not tonight, Honey, I've got a headache...



The writing was on the wall when Star Wars Episode One came out. Nevermind the movie: the Star Wars-related toys, clothing, jigsaw puzzles, posters, dolls, models, music, pyjamas, tupperware, and bed linen left no doubt in anyone's mind that George Lucas was out to make a killing on merchandise sales. So intense was this marketing blitz that you could even buy a lunchbox with a dual-tone image of a villain who had only two lines in the whole movie! And to show that it still has a good sense of humour, fate ultimately determined that the bulk of the dedicated fans would dislike the film. Enter Tomb Raider, the videogame series made

famous by a ridiculously endowed heroine who also has a habit of wearing tight-fitting clothing. Lara Croft, disturbing as her design may be, is almost a household name. Now in its fourth instalment, Eidos Interactive recently announced its tentative plans for Tomb Raider V. However, when a major online survey was conducted globally as to whether a fifth outing with Lara would be as all desirable, a whopping 91% of the world's participants voted against it!

Is it because people are just getting sick of the game? Or is it genuinely becoming as much a contrivance as the Star Wars phenomenon? Consider this: in the last 6 months, Lara Croft has been seen in a cross-promotion with Lucozade on buses and bus stops. She most recently made a jump to the Dreamcast with Tomb Raider 4, which has attracted severe criticism for being a clear case of cheaply cashing in on a new system. What made things worse was that this Dreamcast version was such a poor and direct conversion of the PC version that it has been rated as one of the worst Dreamcast games ever made.

Is it time for Lara to hang up her coat? Have you had enough of her platforming antics? Or do you believe the world needs an Indiana Jane? Write in to us at Australian Station, Level 6, 418a Elizabeth Street, NSW, Australia, 2010; or you can email us at <playstation@next.com.au>. In the meantime, here's what we think...



ALL IS NOT LOST FOR LARA!

A little nookie wasn't a bad idea at first. Now, that's all that there is



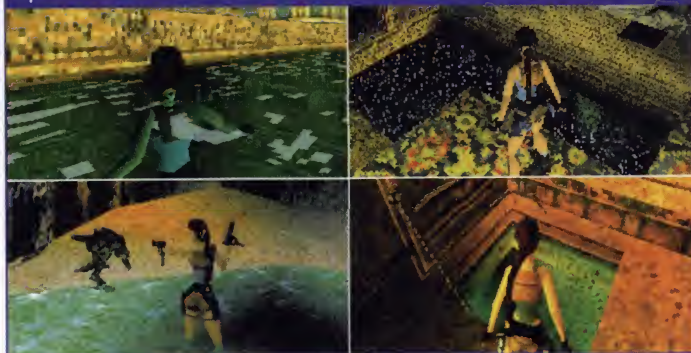
KEVIN CHEUNG

The Tomb Raider "Cash Cow" is not an unfounded label. Through each game sequel, I've seen numerous dubiously executed features added to the game, such as getting Lara to crawl on all fours - all of which are undoubtedly designed to maintain the interest of the slobbering teens. Giving you the opportunity to play with... err... as Lara when she was a teen is no different. And through each of these sequels, not once have I seen any major leap in innovation or design. Four is enough. However, this is no reason to ditch Lara altogether. What the series needs is a serious rethink. Just take a look at Crash Bandicoot, and how it's evolved and expanded over the years. This is not an impossibility for Lara, and it will be a necessity if her legacy is to have the kind of longevity enjoyed by Mario or Crash.

JAMES COBTEE

Tomb Raider 1 was actually an innovative piece of software that tried a lot of new things, but its time has been and gone. If Tomb Raider 5 offers the same incremental level of improvement that Tomb Raider 4 did, then we could be looking at a Lara backlash. How Core Design plan to deal with this threat of mediocrity is anybody's guess. They could upgrade her to the PlayStation 2, giving even more detail to her form at expense of function. New playable characters? Better designed levels? A go kart racing game? It is all a bit of a lost cause, as the franchise has been drawn out so long that it's hard to imagine it as being anything other than the dried out husk it is now. If we want to flog a dead horse, we may as well bring back Frogger. Oh, wait, they did, and it sucked.

Spot the difference: Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3 and 4





NEXT EDITION

EVERGRACE, MUNCH'S ODDYSEE, KESSEN, FANTAVISION, THE BOUNCER, STREET FIGHTER EX 3, DROPSHIP, RESIDENT EVIL 4, DRIVING EMOTION TYPE S, DEAD OR ALIVE 2, WIPEOUT FUSION, FINAL FANTASY X, DARK CLOUD...

LOOK WHAT AWAITS IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE OF STATION!

PLAYSTATION 2

So you liked what you saw the first time around, eh? Well hold on tight, because we have only just scratched the surface. In the next edition of *Australian Station*, expect to see the rest of the PlayStation 2's software lineup busted wide open. We have got full reviews, some industry gossip, technical analyses, answers to all of your questions, and most important of all, details about the Australian launch!

WHAT'S YOUR VICE?

Sexploitation's one thing, what with Pammy Anderson coming to the PlayStation and all, but gambling? That's right, folks, looks like gambling's one of the new uncharted territories that game developers are trying to get into. Find out next month what else they'll be taking advantage of.

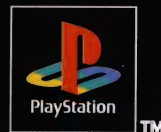
GAUNTLET LEGENDS

The long awaited PlayStation version of the long awaited sequel to one of the greatest coin-munchers of the 1980s. Gauntlet Legends promises the best multiplayer thrills in a long time on the PlayStation! Start digging out those multitaps: you'll need them. The Wizard needs food...

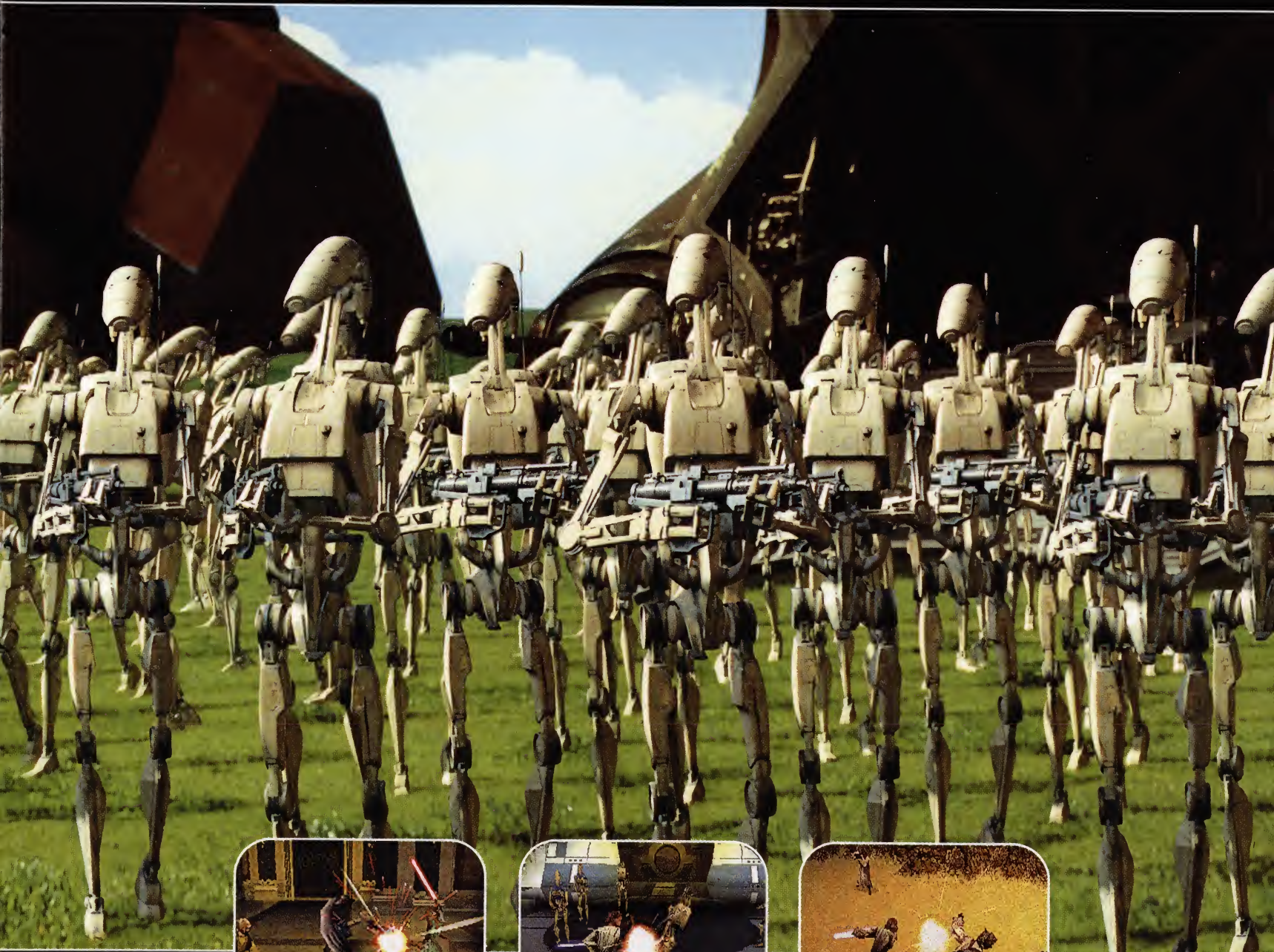


ALSO COMING NEXT MONTH:

The Future History of Gaming, DVD Mania, more Anime, tonnes of new games on review - all here in Australia's Number One resource for PlayStation 2 information!



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